

# Affordability and Acceptability Testing

Interim report on Qualitative research for Bournemouth  
Water & Wessex Water

17<sup>th</sup> July 2023



The current economic climate has had a significant impact on Bournemouth Water and Wessex Water customers, with very few feeling optimistic about the future. NHH customers are feeling the impact on their businesses with the rising cost of fuel and electricity.

The majority of participants chose the 'must do' plan over the proposed plan, and more often than not this was because they were unhappy with paying for the added investments and would prefer to see the investments funded by water companies themselves rather than customer bills.

When it comes to the legally required investments, Bournemouth Water and Wessex Water customers are generally accepting of the investments and bill impacts as they feel these are worthwhile. However, customers remain conscious of affordability and are concerned to see the smaller investments adding up to a large bill impact.

Pollution, leakage and water quality came out as high priority areas amongst the performance commitments, with a strong push to see a more ambitious leakage target. Though sewage flooding seems like an awful problem, it doesn't feel like a common problem in the Bournemouth region, and customers are reluctant to pay to benefit others in this instance.

When it comes to the discretionary investments, there is a reluctance to pay for some areas where customers feel water companies should be fully responsible for funding through their profits or via government schemes such as: Micropollutants, Net zero and Water poverty. However, these are all considered worthwhile investments that should go ahead.

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While some customers are clearly very worried about affordability, for many the question rests more on their willingness to pay for investments that they may not accept as opposed to their inability to pay. The current media activity and industry scrutiny is playing a part with customers nervous that the interests of shareholders are placed ahead of customers.





## 1 x 3hr face-to-face deliberative events

**Stage 1:** Participants to go through pre-read pack and fill out pre-task survey

**Stage 2:** Participants to attend 1 x 3hr event each in person

**Stage 3:** Participants to complete post-task survey and answer questions based on their personal bill projections



Micro NHH

## 1 x 90min reconvened online focus groups

**Stage 1:** Participants to attend first 90 min focus group

**Stage 2:** Participants to attend second 90 min focus group

**Stage 3:** Participants to complete post-task survey and answer questions based on their personal bill projections



Larger NHH

## 4 x 1hr online video depth

**Stage 1:** Participants go through pre-read pack & fill out pre-task survey

**Stage 2:** Participants to attend 1 x 1hr online depth

**Stage 3:** Participants to complete post-task survey and answer questions based on their personal bill projections



## 8 x 1hr online video depth

**Stage 1:** Participants to go through pre-read pack and fill out pre-task survey

**Stage 2:** Participants to attend 1 x 1hr online depth

**Stage 3:** Participants to complete post-task survey and answer questions based on their personal bill projections



## Total sample achieved = 41



### Household sample achieved = 18/16

- **SEG:** 3 x AB, 4 x C1C2, 7 x DE
- **Age:** 6 x under 45, 8 x over 45
- **Gender:** 10 x F, 8 x M
- **Metering:** 6 x metered, 8 x unmetered
- **Recruitment:** 14 x list opt ins, 4 x extras (free find?)



### Future customer sample achieved = 8/8

- **SEG:** 8 x C1C2
- **Age:** 8 x 18-30
- **Gender:** 4 x F, 4 x M
- **Recruitment:** 8 x free find



### Non-household sample achieved = 3/10

- **Size:** 3 x micro NHH
- **Examples of business type include:** restaurant, recruitment, transport
- **Usage type:** 2 x domestic, 1 x domestic and non-domestic
- **Usage volume:** 3 x low spend
- **Recruitment:** 3 x free find

## Total number of opt-ins: 81



### Health vulnerable sample achieved = 6/8

- **Age:** 2 x under 45, 4 x over 45
- **Gender:** 3 x F, 3 x M
- **Metering:** 4 x metered, 2 x unmetered
- **PSR status:** 5 x on or eligible for PSR
- **Examples of vulnerability include:** physical health conditions, mental health problems
- **Recruitment:** 5 x list opt ins, 1 x free find



### Economically vulnerable sample achieved = 6/8

- **Age:** 1 x under 45, 5 x over 45
- **Gender:** 4 x F, 2 x M
- **Metering:** 4 x metered, 2 x unmetered
- **Social tariff:** 1 x ST, 2 x eligible for ST, 3 x don't know
- **Recruitment:** 3 x free find, 3 x flagged social tariff



After the face-to-face event in Bournemouth, it became apparent that the **personalised** bill information that was used for HH customers was incorrect. It only included the Wessex Water part of the bill. This did not affect future customers or 'walk-ins' on the day (for whom we did not hold the bill info).

We managed to recontact and achieve **16/21** post-event surveys with the correct numbers. Despite many attempts and offering a small incentive, we were unable to persuade the final **5** participants to complete the post-event survey again. We have however, used their data for the acceptability scores and other feedback they had initially provided, but removed their responses from the affordability metric.

NHH respondents and all free found respondents were provided the average bill (or provided their annualised bill) and Future customers not given a bill amount; therefore, were not affected by this issue.

In total we achieved **34/39** post-event surveys with the correct numbers



# The customer context

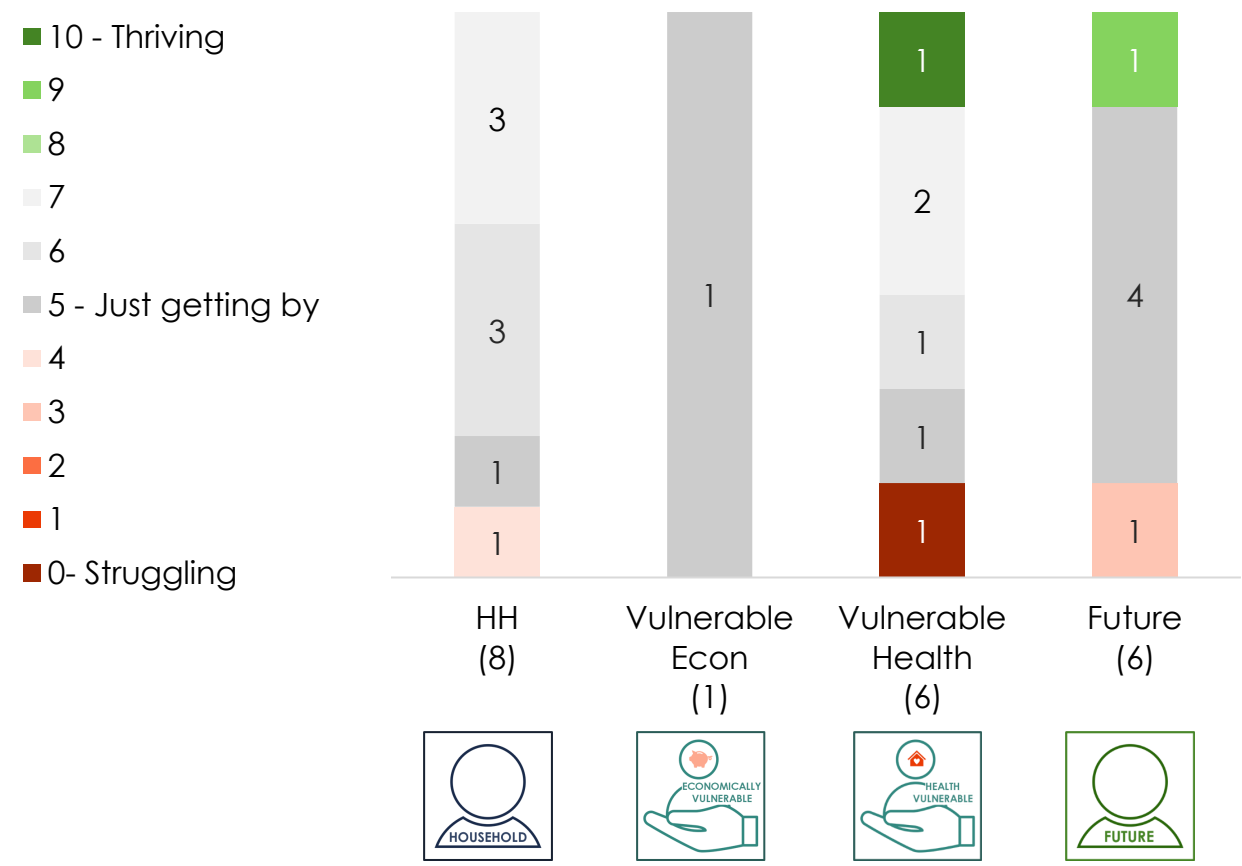


# Views on current financial situation and financial outlook

Many of the customers interviewed feel they are just getting by.

**Note on findings:** Total numbers for pre-task survey responses are below the total sample size as not all customers completed the pre-survey

## FEELINGS ABOUT HOUSEHOLD FINANCES



*"I have just recently retired so am aware that my income is now limited whereas before it was very decent. It's a new chapter of life watching what we spend and accepting previously-bought luxuries or spur of the moment purchases now have to be considered or put aside. We are more aware of household overheads and bills."*  
 HH Bournemouth Answer 7/10

*"My family have enough money to pay the bills and buy food but have cut down on holidays and have made cuts with their outgoings. My dad recently retired and is looking at getting a part time job to continue living the comfortable life he had."*  
 HH Bournemouth Answer 5/10

*"My parents are struggling to keep on top of bills and everyday costs due to the cost of living crisis and their employment/ health situation."*  
 Future Customer Bournemouth Answer 3/10

*"The cost of living is impacting on me and I notice this in my bank statement at the end of each month. I am now choosing to forego/reduce purchases in order to save money."*  
 HH Bournemouth Answer 6/10

Source: Pre task Appendix A, B/C, E: How do you feel about your household finances at this time?

# Views on current financial situation and financial outlook

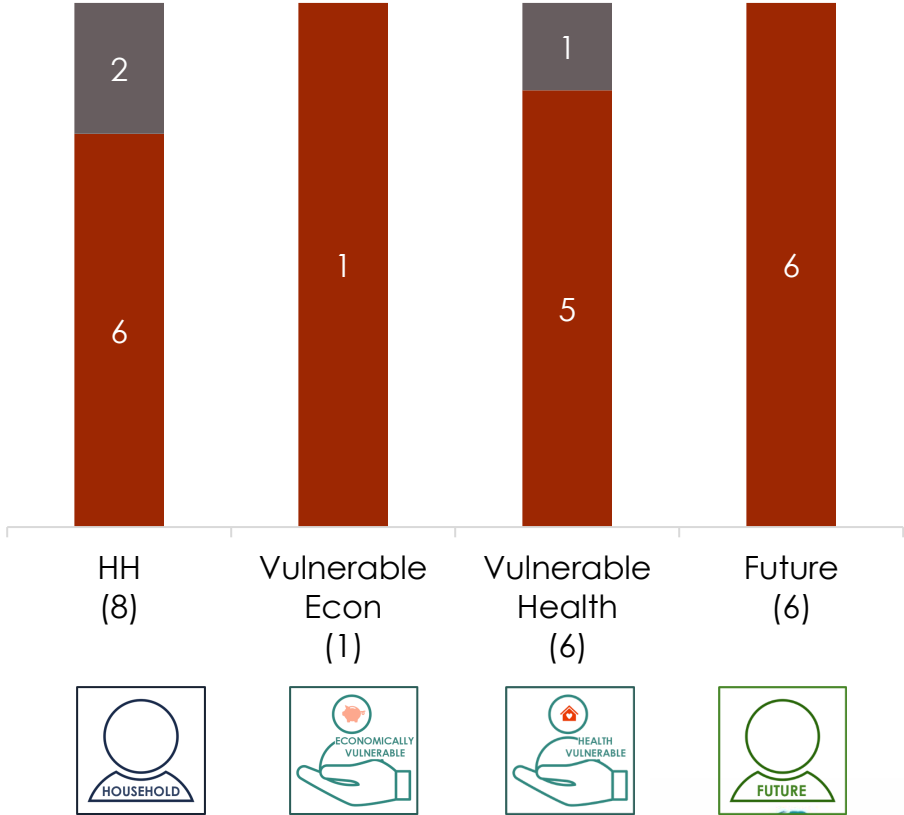
Most of the customers interviewed at this stage feel pessimistic about the current economic situation.

*"If things carry on the way they are I don't think I'll have a business by the end of the year."*  
NHH Bournemouth

*"The cost of living is impacting on me and I notice this in my bank statement at the end of each month. I am now choosing to forego/reduce purchases in order to save money."*  
HH Bournemouth

## FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

- Improving
- Remaining the same
- Worsening



Source: Pre task Appendix A, B/C, E: Do you think the current economic situation is...?



# Expectations for economic climate in the future (in 5 years, in 10 years)

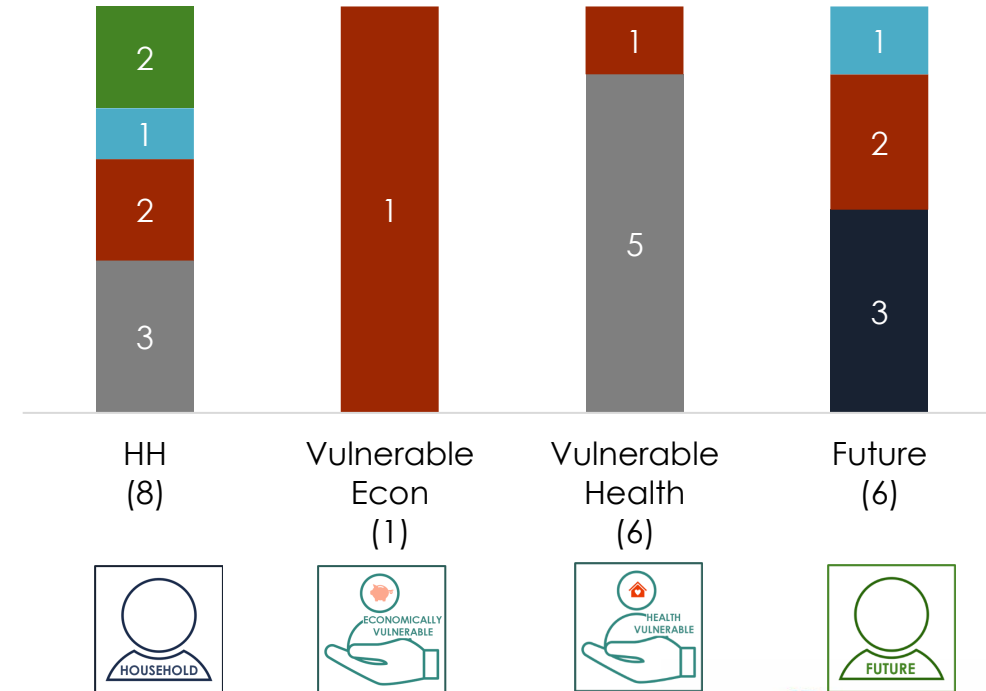
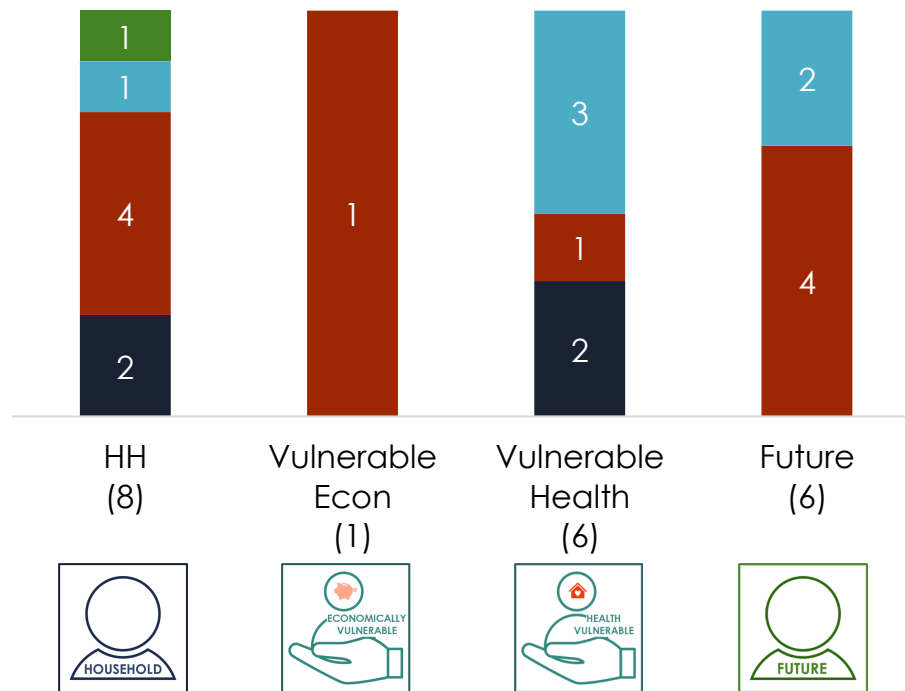
There is a lot of uncertainty and pessimism about future finances in the shorter and longer term.

## LONG TERM FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

### 5 years

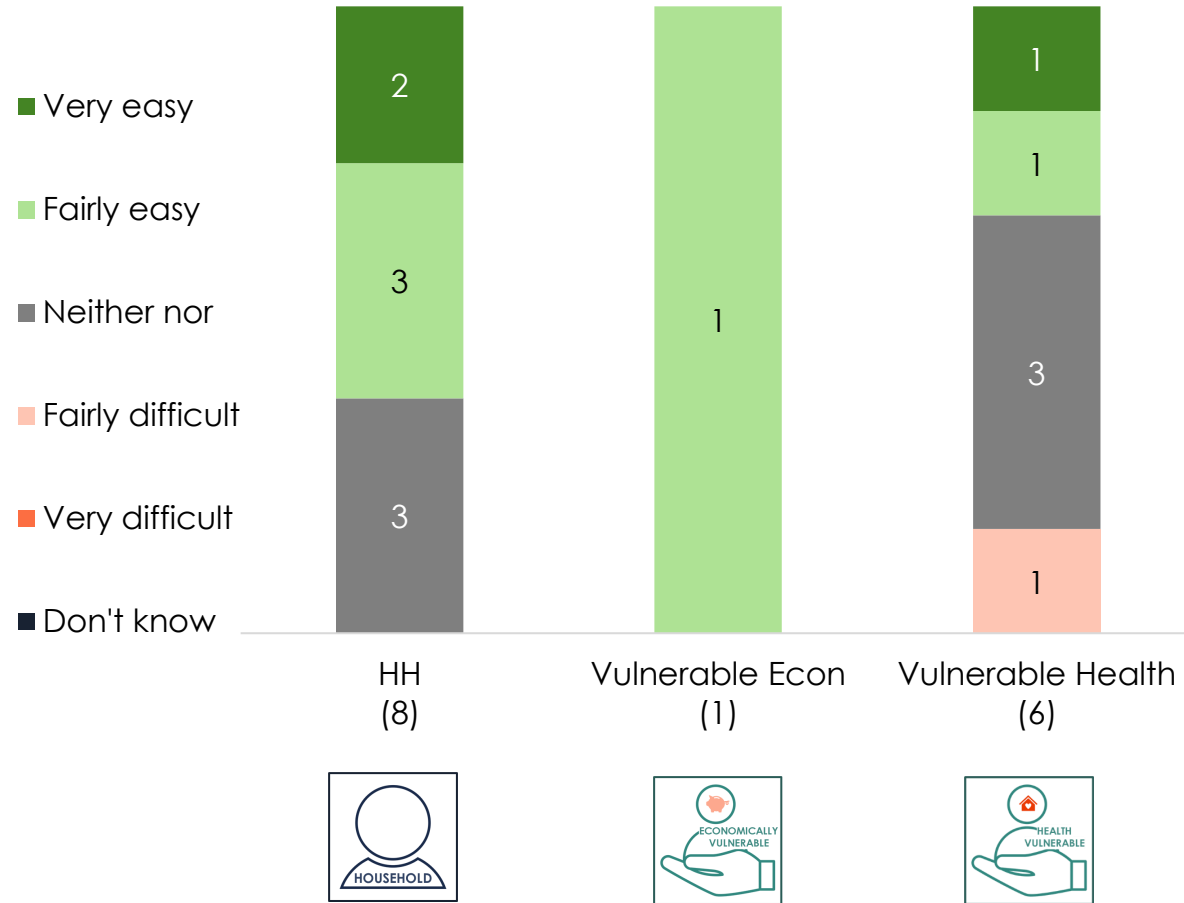
### 10 years

- Better off
- The same
- Worse off
- Don't know



# Current bill affordability for water and sewerage services

Most of the customers interviewed feel their water and sewerage bills are manageable.



Source: Pre task Appendix A, B/C, E: How easy or difficult is it for you to afford to pay your current water and sewerage bill?

# Proposed Plan



BLUE MARBLE

		2050 goals	Legally required <i>No say</i>	5 year targets: <i>customer feedback</i>	Longer term investments: <i>your input on how &amp; when</i>			
Wessex Water's proposal	Effective sewerage system	Halve the impact of sewer flooding on our customers	Reducing the number of sewage spills in 150 locations	£23	Reducing internal and external sewer flooding	£11	Reducing sewage spills in further 45 locations	£11
	Great river & coastal water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To restore the quality of rivers and coastal waters</li> <li>Zero pollution incidents</li> </ul>	Nutrient removal and river water quality monitoring	£47	Reduce pollution incidents to 14 per 10k of sewer pipe	£4		
	Great customer experience	Be a top 10 customer service provider in the UK					Removing everyone from water poverty	£24
	Net zero carbon & biodiversity	Be a net zero carbon business by 2040					Operationally net zero	£6
Bournemouth Water's proposal	Boosting water resources & supply resilience	Resilience to climate change & higher population	Reliable supply of water to customers, even during a drought	£14	Reduce leakage by 15%	£6	350,000 smart meters and water efficiency support	£4
	Maintain top quality drinking water supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water that looks, tastes &amp; smells great</li> <li>Replace all lead pipes</li> </ul>	Continue to deliver clean and safe tap water	£8	Maintain current level of supply interruptions	£0	Replace 20,000 lead pipes	£1.40
	Biodiversity & nature recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doubling nature on sites</li> <li>Net zero operational emissions by 2030</li> </ul>	Protect natural resources	£5	Reduce contacts on taste, smell and appearance	£6	Operationally net zero	£4
	Trusted customer and community experiences	Fair and affordable bills Excellent and innovative customer service					Removing everyone from water poverty	£5

A 1-page summary of the proposed plan was provided as part of the pre-read information with an explanation of the different categories of investment:

- legally required/statutory;
- 5 year performance commitments;
- additional investments proposed to meet longer term outcomes.

### What will it mean for bills?

This proposed plan will have an impact on customers' bills.

**The average bill will increase by £24/month by 2030.**

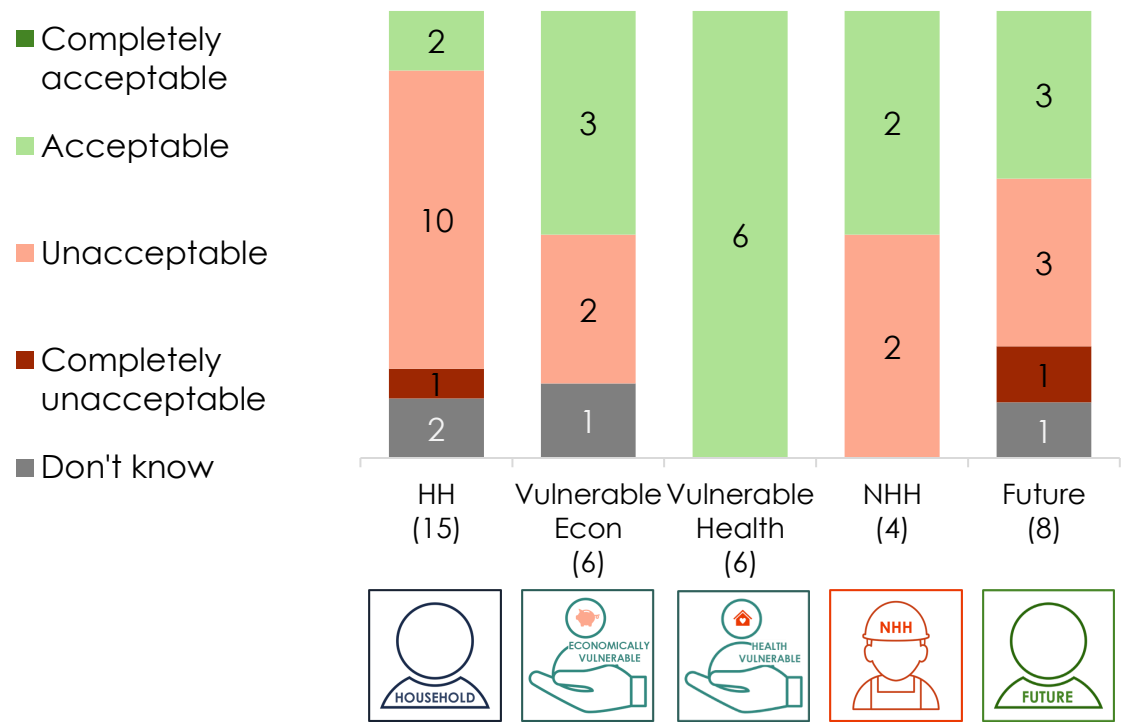
This breaks down as:

- **£10 to meet the investment required** by the regulators (*the blue and grey investments*)
- **£5 to meet the investments we propose** over and above this (*the white investments*)
- **£8 to meet inflation**

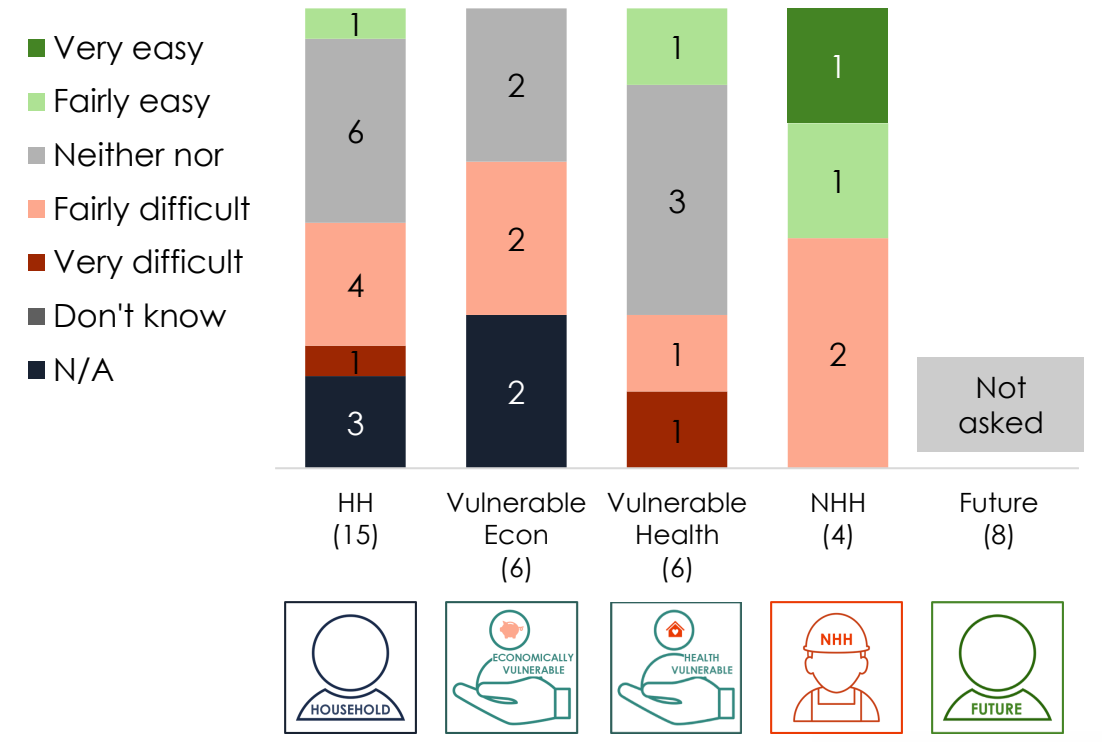
# Summary: Proposed plan acceptability and affordability (using personalised bills)

Reactions to the proposed plan are mixed – this is largely driven by HH customers. Most HH customers are uncertain or feel they would not be able to afford the bill.

## ACCEPTABILITY



## AFFORDABILITY

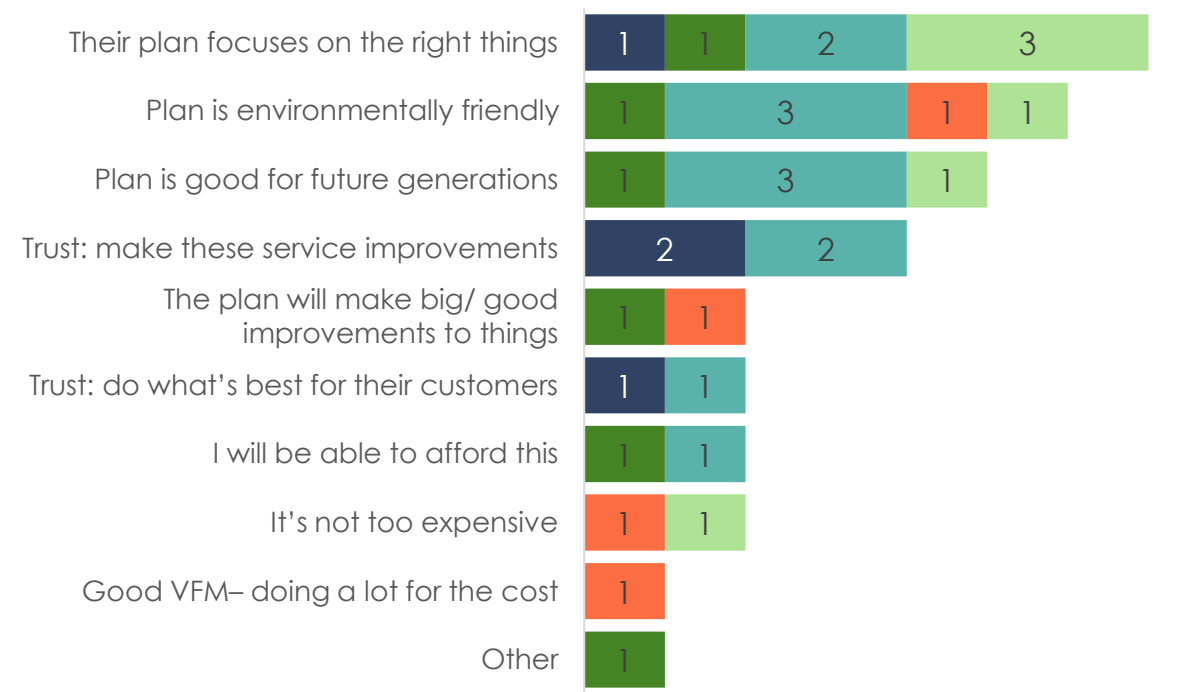


Source: Appendix A, B/C, D, E: Thinking about how your income may change in the future, how easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to afford the water and sewerage bills for the proposed plan? Based on everything you have heard and read about the company's proposed business plan, how acceptable or unacceptable is it to you?

# Summary: Reasons for accepting/rejecting the Proposed plan

The plan is seen as a positive step in the right direction and deemed environmentally friendly. Those who reject the plan see it as too expensive and believe water companies should have a greater financial responsibility. Bournemouth Water might consider a campaign to provide more explanation about the cost of investments and the relationship with company profits.

## Reasons for accepting



Household (2)
  Vulnerable Econ (3)
  Vulnerable Health (6)
  NHH (2)
  Future (3)

## Reasons for rejecting



Household (11)
  Vulnerable Econ (2)
  Vulnerable Health (0)
  NHH (2)
  Future (4)

Source: Appendix A, B/C, D, E: Thinking about how your income may change in the future, how easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to afford the water and sewerage bills for the proposed plan? Based on everything you have heard and read about the company's proposed business plan, how acceptable or unacceptable is it to you?



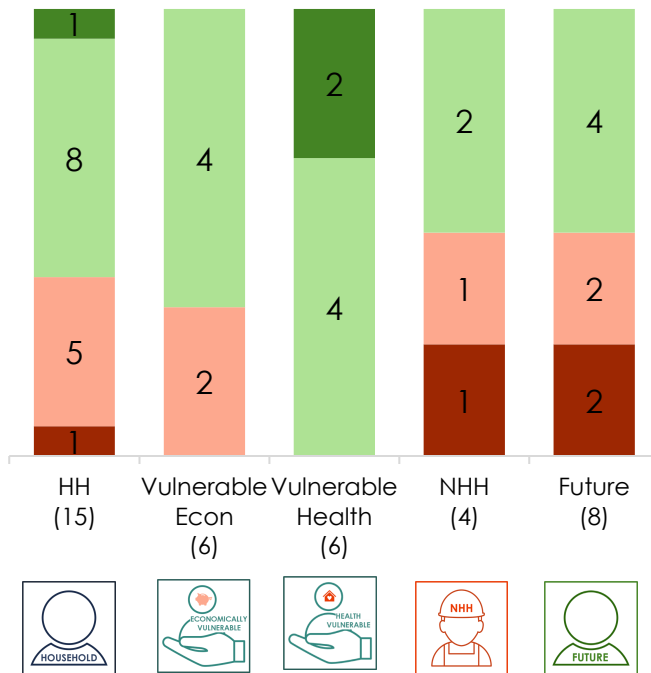
# Summary: Trust

2 in 3 customers interviewed trust Bournemouth Water & Wessex Water to deliver this plan. While some agree that the service is satisfactory, the belief that shareholders are prioritised is widespread. And it was not specifically aimed at Bournemouth Water or Wessex Water.

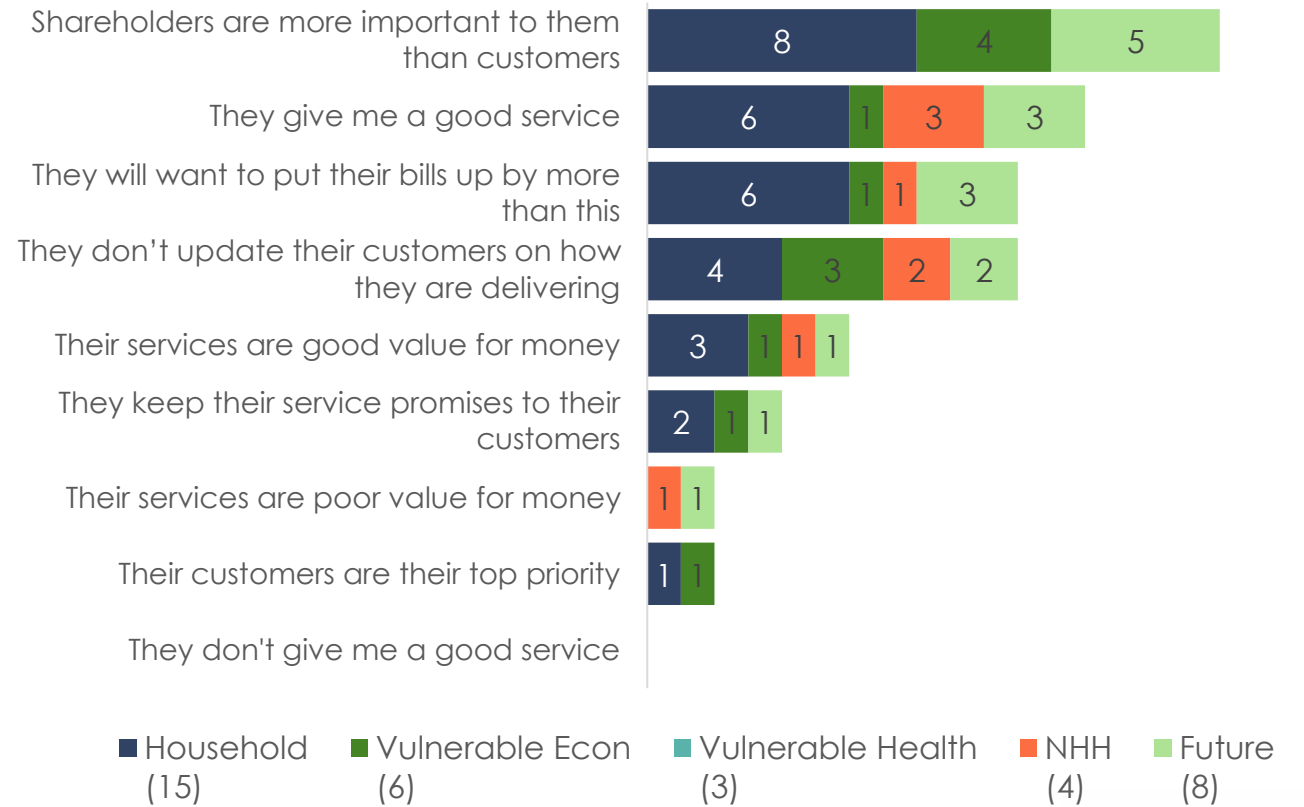


## TRUST

- Trust them to deliver it all
- Trust them to deliver some of it
- Trust them to deliver a little of it
- Don't trust them to deliver it



## Reasons why



# Response to legal required elements: STORM OVERFLOWS

Overall, customers accept this investment with some feeling that Wessex Water should be more ambitious given the importance of the issue and the prevalence in the media.



An effective sewerage system

37

Legally required  
No say  
  
**Reducing the number of sewage spills in 150 locations**  
  
£23 per year

**2050 target:**  
To halve the number of sewer flooding incidents.

**i Storm overflows**

When there is too much rainfall for sewers to handle, storm overflows allow rain water, mixed with sewage, to escape into a separate pipe which eventually flows into a river or the sea. This helps to reduce the risk of properties being flooded with sewage.

There are around 15,000 storm overflows in England, and 1,300 for Wessex Water. Each company (in England) has a target set by Government to reduce the use of storm overflows:

- By 2035, water companies will have: improved all overflows discharging into or near every designated bathing water; and improved 75% of overflows discharging to high priority sites
- By 2050, no storm overflows will be permitted to operate outside of unusually heavy rainfall or to cause any adverse ecological harm

Wessex Water will need to spend £758m to meet these requirements for 2025-2030, and this will add £23 per year to the average household water bill.

*“150 is not a lot. How many sewers are there? They should just complete the job.”  
Future Bournemouth*

**Deliberation centres around:**

- There are concerns around how the sewage spills would be measured and reported; customers want to ensure that this process is transparent
- Sewage pollution is an important issue and one that needs to be addressed quickly
- Given the size of the area covered by Wessex Water, there were questions as to whether 150 locations was enough
- Customers feel the existing allowances are too generous and there needs to be more action taken

**Response to mandated investment**

- An important investment that should definitely go ahead – sewage spills are clearly a big issue and one that is affecting waters across the UK
- However, strong feelings that this falls under the responsibility of water companies and is something that they should be dealing with quickly
  - But do accept the rise in bills to address the problem as it needs to be dealt with

Summary	
Important	✓
Urgent	✓
Willing to pay	✓
Able to pay	✓





# Response to legal required elements: NUTRIENT REMOVAL

Though customers care about the environmental benefits to this investment, there are concerns around water companies benefitting from it financially.

Great river & coastal water

38

**2050 target**  
To restore the quality of rivers and coastal waters

**i** The services that water companies provide must comply with environmental laws in England/Wales, as well as UK/Welsh Government policy.

- Excess nitrogen and phosphorus can affect the health of river and coastal waters, negatively impacting plant and wildlife who live there
- A large portion of Wessex Water's region has been designated as requiring additional nutrient removal to allow a further 70,000 homes to be built
- As a result, Wessex Water needs to remove 1,500 tonnes of nitrogen and phosphorus from entering rivers and the sea. This will improve river water quality and help unblock the housing backlog across the country
- Partnership working with farmers and landowners will be vital – and using nature-based solutions where possible, which are often cheaper, create less carbon, and increase biodiversity

Wessex Water will need to spend £830m to meet these requirements for 2025-2030, and this will add £47 per year to the average household water bill.

Legally required  
No say

Nutrient removal and river water quality monitoring

£47 per year

*"I think adding a cost on for things like the river water quality and things like that makes sense. The money is not going to come out of thin air and if it's something we value then it's worth investing in."*  
HH Bournemouth

**Deliberation centres around:**

- Customers feel it's important for Wessex Water to invest in environmental improvements
- They'd like to know more about the way this is measured and monitored – especially considering the high cost of the investment and the impact on their bills
- Concerns that this is a money-making exercise and the water company just wants to profit from new housing
- NHH customers are concerned that this investment has such a large bill impact for an issue they've never heard of before

**Response to mandated investment**

- Urgent and important from the environmental side of things; but still feels like a high cost
- Generally, happy with the investment but want to make sure it's being done for the right reasons (i.e. not just to build more houses and make more profit)
- Does feel expensive and a big addition to bills



*"I do wonder whether they're thinking everybody's going to have to get used to electricity and gas going up. This is our chance to put water up as well..."*  
HH Bournemouth

Summary	
Important	✓
Urgent	✓
Willing to pay	?
Able to pay	?

Customers are happy for this investment to go ahead as resilience is vital to ensure we have enough water in future.

**Boosting water resources & supply resilience**

Legally required / must-do

**Reliable supply of water to customers, even during a drought**

**£14 per year**

**2050 target: Balancing the water needs of people and the environment**

39

Water companies have to publish a Water Resources Management Plan, which sets out how they plan to balance demand for water with supply, even during an extreme drought.

A mix of solutions is used to both reduce demand (from leakage and from customers) and to increase available supply.

Here we are asking about the must do component of the plan – where this is little opportunity for alternatives. This covers:

- New supplies – such as utilising old quarry pits
- Connecting new customers and making sure there is the infrastructure to supply them
- Connecting resources across geographical areas so that there is flexibility in how people are supplied

Later on we will ask about more flexible options such as leakage reduction and customer metering.

**Bournemouth Water (as part of South West Water) will need to spend £126m to meet these requirements for 2025-2030, and this will add £14 per year to the average household water bill. Housing developers will also be required to contribute to the costs.**

39

*“It’s an easy win!”*  
 HH Bournemouth

*“Wouldn’t have much of an issue paying for the reliable water supply.”*  
 NHH Bournemouth

**Deliberation centres around:**

- Customers felt that due to Bournemouth Water not facing big problems with drought, this was an easy win for them as it should be easier for them to build resilience
- A vital investment – we can’t live without water and companies should do whatever they need to do to ensure we always have access to it

**Response to mandated investment**

- A no brainer – ensuring there is enough water is crucial, no matter what the spend
- Happy for customer bills to be put towards this




*“That’s quite a good ambition for them isn’t it?”*  
 HH Bournemouth

Summary	
Important	✓
Urgent	✓
Willing to pay	✓
Able to pay	✓

Overall strong acceptability for this investment as it is a basic requirement.

Maintain top quality drinking water supplies


40

Legally required / must-do

Continue to deliver clean and safe tap water

£8 per year

i

**2050 target:** High quality drinking water

**Continue to deliver clean and safe tap water**

Invest £120 million between 2025 and 2030 to continue to meet high standards for water quality and deliver clean and safe drinking water that looks and tastes great. This programme is agreed with the Drinking Water Inspectorate, which regulates water quality on behalf of the water industry

Investing in:

- Catchment management to manage water quality issues at source
- Major upgrades to 13 treatment works

Bournemouth (as part of South West Water) will need to spend £120m to meet these requirements for 2025-2030, and this will add £8 per year to the average household water bill.

“I think 8 quid is a lot cheaper than buying bottle water. So if it does become drinkable, it's reasonable.”

HH Bournemouth

**Deliberation centres around:**

- Water quality is obviously important, and Bournemouth Water should do whatever they need to do to ensure the quality is high
- One customer felt the £8 charge would benefit them financially in the long term as they currently pay to drink bottled water
- NHH appreciate that this is a must do

**Response to mandated investment**


- A small investment to ensure that water remains safe to drink
- A relatively small investment for something that's so important
- A 'must do'




Summary	
Important	✓
Urgent	✓
Willing to pay	✓
Able to pay	✓

A worthwhile investment that addresses an overall responsibility for caring for the environment.

Boost biodiversity, nature recovery and protect the planet



**2050 target:**  
Doubling nature on South West Water sites


41

Legally required  
No say

Protect natural resources

£5 per year

i

**Protecting natural resources**

Invest £72million to protect and enhance wildlife, for example by:

- Working with partners and landowners to remove weirs or include fish and eel pass installations to ensure that fish and eels can reach upstream habitats
- Habitat creation through creating ponds, tree planting and restoration
- Controlling non – native invasive species to ensure that native varieties can thrive
- Investment to protect river flows during times of drought

**Bournemouth Water (as part of South West Water) will need to spend £72m to meet these requirements for 2025-2030, and this will add £5 per year to the average household water bill.**

*“We have a duty of care to the environment. Water is one of the top things. I think they should be looking into that and biodiversity and stuff like that.”*  
 HH Bournemouth

**Deliberation centres around:**

- Important to think about the environment and biodiversity – some consider that everyone has a duty of care in this area
- But in the context of the cost-of-living crisis where people are struggling with bills, this takes a bit of a backseat
- NHH customers agree that this is not high on the priority list but do not have an issue with the investment going ahead

**Response to mandated investment**

- No strong objections to this investment, but in the context of all the other investments customers are conscious of another addition to the bill





*“I mean, I think going with what you said about the money, having affordable bills as one of the aims and then all the others kind of contradict because obviously bills are going to go up to customers if they want to achieve all the other things.”*  
 HH Bournemouth

Summary	
Important	✓
Urgent	✓
Willing to pay	?
Able to pay	✓

Leakage, pollution and water quality are considered the high priority investments – customers feel there is room for more ambition in these areas.

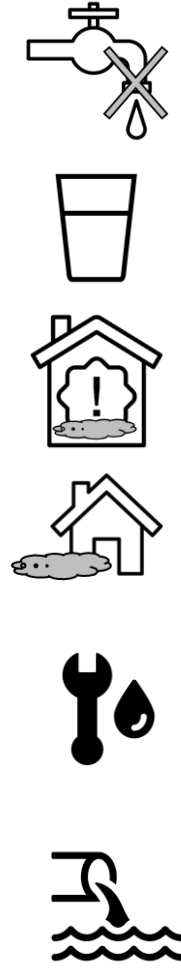
Wessex Water & Bournemouth Water propose an investment plan for 2025-30 to start to meet its long term goals.


The proposed commitments to improve on the key performance areas


			TODAY's performance	Target 2025	Target 2030	What this will add to your bill
Supply interruptions	 Bournemouth Water	Average time without water per household	13.7 mins	5 mins	5 mins	£6
Water Quality	 Bournemouth Water	Contacts per 1,000 population	1.6	1.33	1	£3
Internal sewer flooding	 Bournemouth Water	Incidents per 10,000 connections	1.43	1.63	1.04	£11
External sewer flooding	 Bournemouth Water	Incidents per 10,000 connections	19.27	16.73	14.50	
Leakage	 Bournemouth Water	Number of litres lost per property per day	83.6	103.1	78.0	£6
Pollution	 Bournemouth Water	Incidents per 10,000km of sewer	22	23.74	17.6	£4


"The thing that seems to affect us is pollution..."  
HH Bournemouth


"I bet so many people have leaky toilets, taps, things like that. I fixed a leaky toilet at home recently. Sometimes it's so subtle you can barely see it's just leaking a tiny bit. And it uses probably so much water."  
HH Bournemouth




- Supply interruptions were considered a medium priority compared with the others here. 

- A high priority – water quality is crucial as it is a basic need
- Not something that customers want to compromise on and the investment is low. 

- These investments were considered lower priority – flooding doesn't feel like a pertinent issue in the Bournemouth region 
- Some considered that they would be paying for customers in other areas to benefit

- Customers were shocked and frustrated by the amount of water lost through leakage 
- Customers would like to see a more ambitious target here

- Another high priority investment – pollution is felt to be a big issue at the moment 
- Measure is confusing for customers

# Response to plan enhancements: MICROPOLLUTANTS

A concerning problem that needs to be dealt with – customers would prefer for this to be addressed sooner but don't think it's their responsibility to pay for it.



Net zero carbon and biodiversity

Discretionary investments  
*You decide*

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Removing micro pollutants

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£8

**2050 target:**  
Be a net zero carbon business by 2040

**Proposal for improving the treatment of sewage sludge to remove micropollutants from being spread to land**

- Trialling new technologies that, if they work, have the potential to turn the sludge into a material that does not have any carbon emissions (essentially an ash) which also destroys micropollutants in the sludge so these wouldn't be spread to land.
- If they work Wessex Water will implement these at scale in the future, reducing the carbon emissions and reducing the volume of the waste product we produce.
- Legislation does not currently prevent sludge being spread to land, but may do so in the future. Wessex Water propose to test new technology now and ensure it develops in case this change occurs

**Wessex Water propose to spend £150m on removing micropollutants, and this would add £8 to the average bill.**

49

**Deliberation centres around:**

- For customers this feels like a real problem that needs to be addressed as soon as possible
- Option B appears to be 'sweeping it under the rug' and putting off a solution – customers would prefer to see the issue to be addressed head on
- Incinerators feel like a step in the wrong direction as they're bad for the environment
- NHH felt reluctant to pay towards research; they'd like further info before deciding

"The blue option is getting us nowhere really – is just putting off the inevitable."  
 HH Bournemouth

Net zero carbon and biodiversity

Discretionary investments  
*You decide*

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Removing micro pollutants

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£8

**The long term ambition is to be a net zero business by 2040.**

**How would you like Wessex Water to invest?**

**A Proposed:**  
Trialling & implementing new technologies to turn the sludge into a material that does not have any carbon emissions & also destroys micropollutants in the sludge such as microplastics so these wouldn't be spread to land.

**B: 'Least cost' option:**  
• Continue to spread sludge to land by building more storage barns to cope with increasing volumes.  
• Test new sludge treatment technologies in the near term in readiness for any future legislation changes, but not roll these out.  
NB This option does not reduce carbon impact nor provide a new way to dispose of sludge.

**C - Back up:** If proposed plans don't work – and the ability to spread to land is significantly reduced, Wessex Water would have to install (carbon intensive) incinerators and dryers at some sites to burn the sludge. This would remove the micropollutants in the sludge

Bill impact by end of each 5 year period

	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
A	£8	£14	£6	£6	£6
B	£6	£1.50	£0.50	£0.50	£0.50
C	£10	£9.50	£1.40	£1.40	£1.40

**A is the proposed plan.**

**B is the minimum requirement plan**

**C is a back up plan for option A**

50

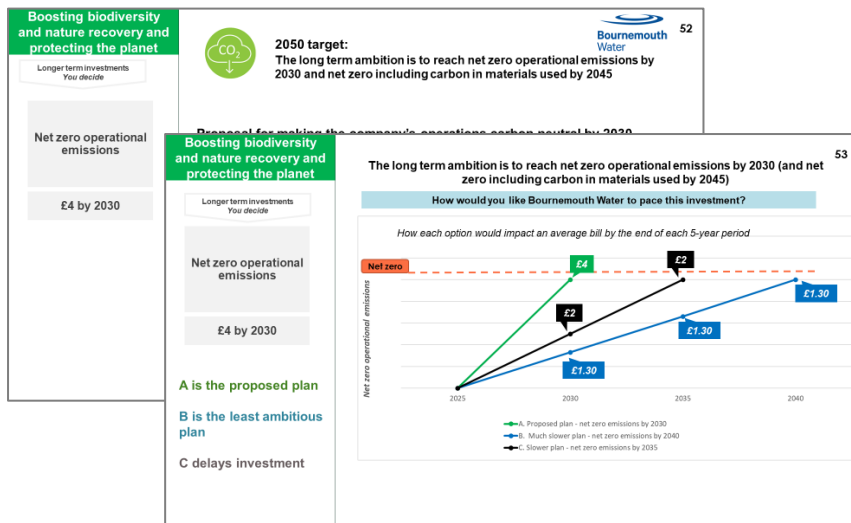
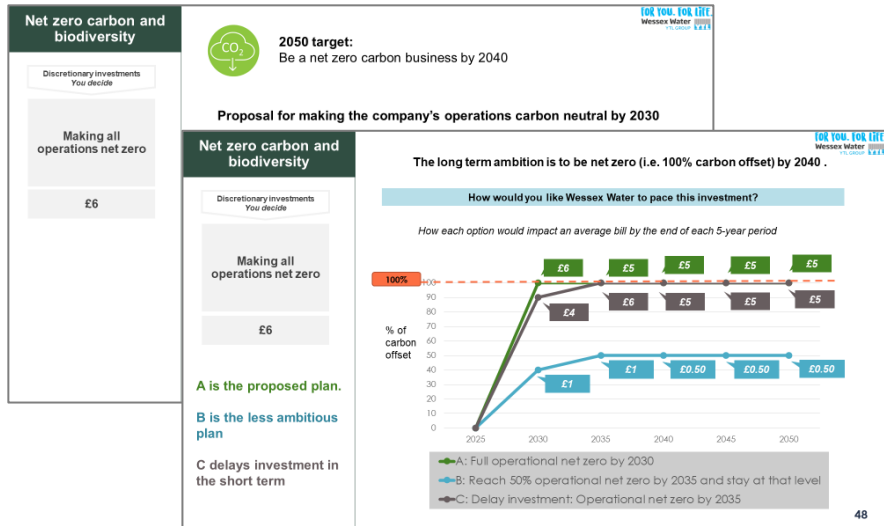
**Response to proposed plan and alternatives**

- Some would like to see option A so that the problem is addressed
- Others who feel this is water company responsibility would prefer not to pay or to pay less – but option B doesn't feel like a permanent solution

Summary	
Important	✓
Urgent	✓
Willing to pay	X
Able to pay	✓

# Response to plan enhancements: NET ZERO

An important investment that water companies should be paying for themselves through their profits, not through customer bills. Bournemouth Water might consider communicating to customers how these types of investments are funded and why it filters through to customer bills.



### Deliberation centres around:

- This is considered an important investment that needs to happen
- But customers are reluctant to pay for this investment – it feels like something that strongly sits within the responsibility of the water company and should be paid for with their profits
- Electric vehicles are seen as problematic. Participants suggested they should already have a budget for vehicle replacement and they shouldn't need to increase the bills
- Tree planting and offsetting feel a bit like lip service

### Response to proposed plan and alternatives

- Happy with the overall goal but not comfortable with pay for the investments
- Wessex Water should be ambitious but should pay for these investments with their own profits
- Customers would prefer to pick and choose which areas they invest in for this area



*"These targets sound cliché, it sound like they've just picked the same standard actions that everyone else chooses."*  
HH Bournemouth

Summary	
Important	✓
Urgent	✓
Willing to pay	✗
Able to pay	✓



An important and topical issue – the more that can be done, the better.

**An effective sewerage system**
52

Discretionary investments  
*You decide*

---

Reducing sewage spills in a further 45 locations

---

£11

**2050 target:**  
To halve the number of sewer flooding incidents.

**Proposed plan for reducing sewage spills in a further 45 locations - by 2030**

- Increase investment in this area from £500 million to £734 million over the five years between 2025 and 2030
- Start with storm overflows that discharge most frequently and those that have any environmental impact
- Work with communities to fit sustainable drainage solutions like soakaways
- Increase environmental and public health monitoring at key locations
- Use artificial intelligence to manage the sewerage network and provide real time bathing water information

**Wessex Water propose to spend £250m on reducing sewage spills in a further 45 locations, and this would add £11 to the average bill.**

**An effective sewerage system**
53

Discretionary investments  
*You decide*

---

Reducing sewage spills in further 45 locations

---

£11

**A is the proposed plan.**

**B is the legally required plan.**

**C accelerates the delivery to 2045 instead of 2050**

**The long-term ambition is for the spills from almost 700 overflows to be reduced in line with 2050 legislative targets**

**How would you like Wessex Water to pace this investment?**

Year	Scenario A (Proposed)	Scenario B (Legally required)	Scenario C (Accelerated)
2030	£34	£23	£34
2035	£17	£25	£17
2040	£40	£28	£25
2045	£49	£34	£34
2050	£0	£31	£31

— A: Proposal is to move faster than legal requirement, adding another £11 to 2025-30 bill  
— B: Least cost (legally required) plan - this £23 impact already covered earlier  
— C: this plan accelerates meeting the target - almost 700 storm overflows reduced by 2045

## Deliberation centres around:

- Seems like there has been a lack of historic investment to address this problem and there's a perception that water companies have been 'getting away with it'
- The problem is important for some customers – water quality and health being two of the biggest
- This is something that should be 'as standard', rather than a luxury



"I would like to be able to swim in the sea before I die."  
HH Bournemouth

## Response to proposed plan and alternatives

- Happy with the proposed plan to get the issue resolved sooner
- Again, feels like water company responsibility to pay for the investment

"If you deal with the issue sooner – you'll have less environmental impact, less pollution. It might end up saving money. The final five years you'll have some respite."  
HH Bournemouth

Summary	
Important	✓
Urgent	✓
Willing to pay	?
Able to pay	✓



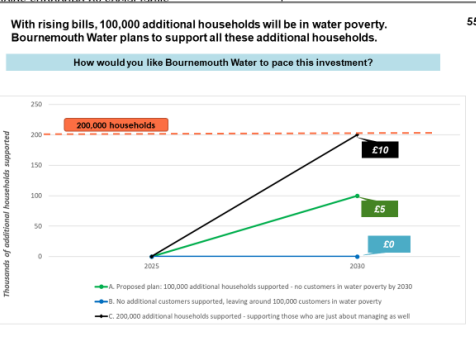
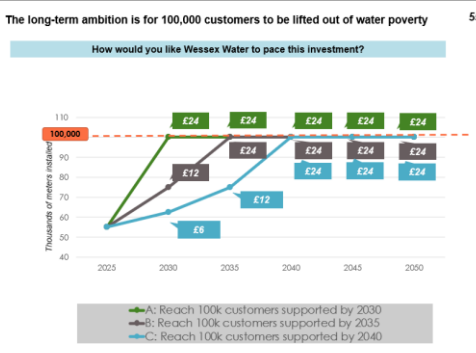
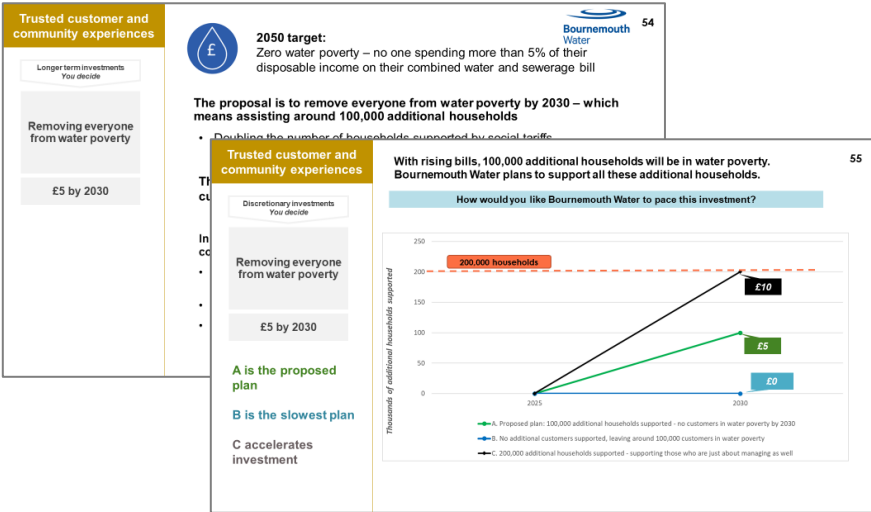
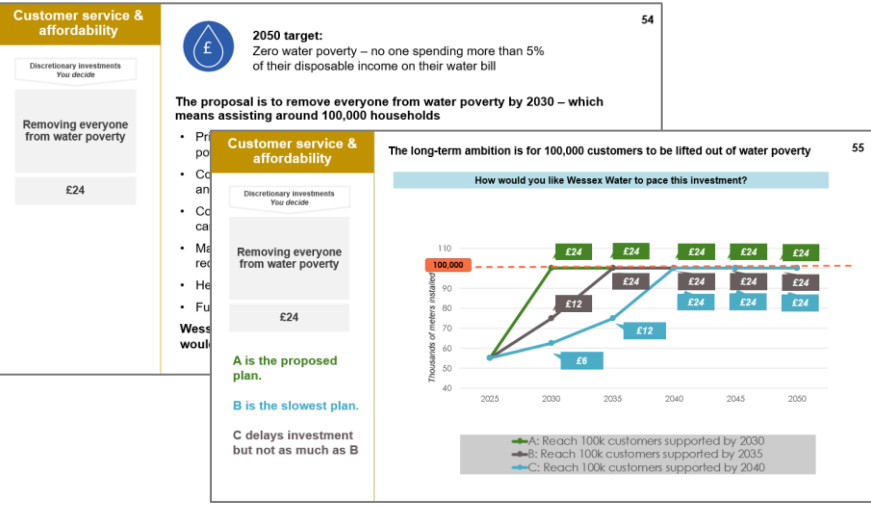


# Response to plan enhancements: WATER POVERTY

Overall, customers support this investment but don't want to foot the bill. It shows a lack of understanding around how exactly the cross subsidy works but also a potential lack of support. The cost of living crisis may be an explanation for this.



*"I don't see what this has to do with my water. It sounds selfish, but it's not really relevant to me. There are charities out there that deal with water bill support. I could just pay a charity if I wanted to contribute to this.."*  
 HH Bournemouth



## Deliberation centres around:

- Though customers aren't against other customers getting support with paying their bills, there was pushback against the cross-subsidy
- Some felt that the responsibility for subsidising those struggling lies with water companies, the government
- Others felt that the cross-subsidy should be relative to usage – if you use a lot of water you should pay more towards helping others

## Response to proposed plan and alternatives

- In the context of the cost of living crisis, customers support the investment in that it will help those struggling
- However, the cross-subsidy mechanism may push others into water poverty and customers don't feel it's fair for them to pay
- Customers are inclined to choose the slowest plan if the funding comes from their bills

Summary	
Important	✓
Urgent	✓
Willing to pay	x
Able to pay	?



NB in the deliberative events, customers discussed either the BW or the WW affordability plans

# Response to plan enhancements: SMART METERS

Smart meters are considered to only really benefit water companies, with minimal benefit for customers – a non-urgent investment. There is scepticism about how well they work, how much can be saved (financially) and whether it should be a priority. Previous experience (in energy) plays a role for some customers.

Boosting water resources & supply resilience

Discretionary investments  
You decide

Installing smart meters

£4

48

**2035 target:**  
Installing 1,000,000 smart meters by 2035 so that every customer has a smart meter.

**Proposal for installing smart meters**

- Install 350,000 smart meters between 2025 and 2030
- Support customers to use less water with water efficiency advice and support – such as free water audits and water saving products

**Bournemouth Water (as part of the wider South West Water region) plans to spend £56 million to install 350,000 smart meters by 2030. This would add £4 to the average bill by 2030.**

Boosting water resources & supply resilience

Longer term investments  
You decide

Installing smart meters

£4 by 2030

49

**The long term ambition is to install 1,000,000 smart meters by 2035 so that every household has a smart meter**

How would you like Bournemouth Water to pace this investment?

How each option would impact an average bill by the end of each 5-year period

—●— A. Proposed plan - every customer has a smart meter by 2035  
—●— B. Slower plan - every customer has a smart meter by 2045

**A is the proposed plan**

**B is the less ambitious plan**

### Deliberation centres around:

- Customers are generally confused as to how these would work and how they'd benefit them – what could customers viably use the data for?
- Concerns around smart meters following negative press – both around whether they work and whether they are safe
- Generally, smart meters feel more useful to the water company than they do for the customer
- They also feel like a 'nice to have' rather than an essential investment
- Some did mention the benefit of helping customers reduce usage and leakage

### Response to proposed plan and alternatives

- Most happy to see a slower rollout for smart meters as it doesn't feel like it's an urgent issue
- Some suggestions that customers should pay for their own smart meters if they want them



"This feels more like a nice to have than a must have."  
HH Bournemouth

"I mean I love my smart meter for electricity. Check it daily. But it doesn't change anything."  
HH Bournemouth

Summary	
Important	X
Urgent	X
Willing to pay	?
Able to pay	✓



NB in the deliberative events, customers discussed either the BW or the WW affordability plans

# Response to plan enhancements: LEAD PIPES

This investment raised concerns, with many feeling this shouldn't be considered if not a current health issue. Bournemouth Water customers responded differently to this investment that Bristol & South West Water customers.

Maintain top quality drinking water supplies

Bournemouth Water 50

Longer term investments  
You decide

Replacing lead pipes

£1.40 by 2030

**2050 target:**  
Replace 90,000 lead communication and supply pipes to achieve a lead free network by 2050

*Lead pipes are a relic from the past, before people discovered that lead was harmful. They exist in older houses and take water from the water main in the street to the first tap in the house. The risks to health are low, but higher for young children. Water companies dose water supplied through lead pipes with low levels of phosphates to keep customers safe.*

**Proposal for replacing lead pipes**

- Replace 20,000 lead pipes by 2030
- Offer a mix of free and subsidised replacement for pipes owned by customers, with those on the lowest incomes receiving a free replacement
- Ensure that there are no lead pipes supplying nurseries, schools and hospitals.

**Bournemouth Water (as part of the wider South West Water region) plans to spend £20 million to replace 20,000 lead pipes by 2030. This would add £2 to the average bill by 2030.**

Maintain top quality drinking water supplies

51

Longer term investments  
You decide

Replacing lead pipes

£1.40 by 2030

**The long term ambition is to replace 90,000 lead pipes by 2050**

**How would you like Bournemouth Water to pace this investment?**

How each option would impact an average bill by the end of each 5-year period

— A. Proposed plan - smooth profile of investment to 2050  
— B. Slower plan - delay investment to 2040 and accelerate after that  
— C. Faster plan - investment is accelerated to be lead free by 2040

**A is the proposed plan**

**B delays investment in the short term**

**C accelerates investment**

## Deliberation centres around:

- Confusion around how much of an issue this is; questions as to how many HH properties still contain lead pipes and what proportion of the population is affected
- If it's a health concern, it feels urgent... but if not, then why bother?
- Some argue that this should be the responsibility of the homeowner, rather than the water company

## Response to proposed plan and alternatives

- A mixed response – some voted for the proposed as it was a small investment, and the problem would be resolved
- Others felt responsibility lay with the individual and would be happy to see slower replacement, especially if not an urgent health issue



"If it's a health concern, you've got to replace them as quickly as possible – spend more now."  
HH Bournemouth

"If it's dangerous, it's probably best to get rid of them."  
HH Bournemouth

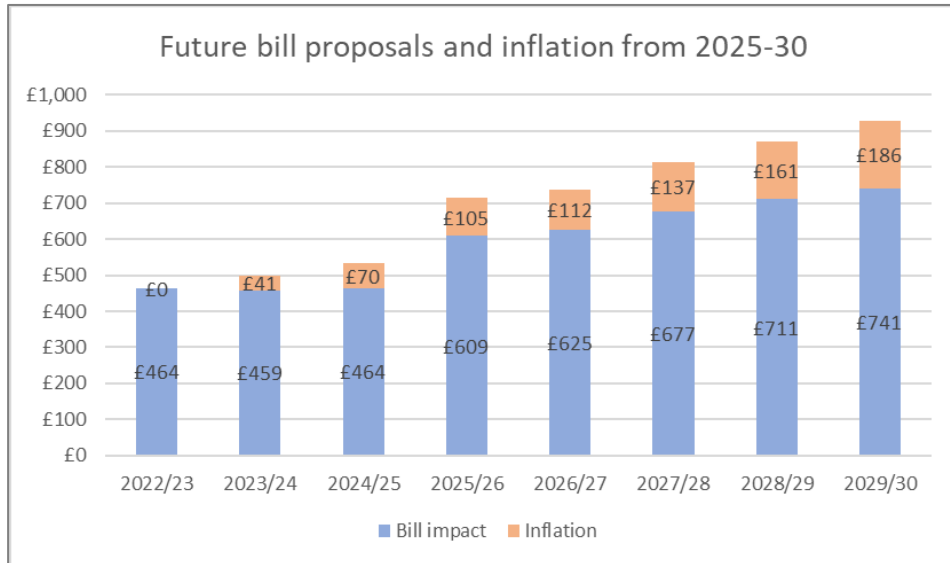
Summary	
Important	?
Urgent	?
Willing to pay	?
Able to pay	✓



NB in the deliberative events, customers discussed either the BW or the WW affordability plans

# Proposed plan – bill impact (average bill)

The proposed plan feels like a big jump compared with what they're currently paying.



*"For me, my company gave me a 10% increase to account for inflation. It's scary to look at the (bill increase) numbers right now, but everything is crazy right now anyway. Water is important, so even though it looks like my bill might double, it still seems worth it."*  
HH Bournemouth

## Concerned response

- In the context of other bills increasing, this change in water bill feels unsustainable
- Feels like a huge and painful jump for customers, especially as they feel that wages will not increase at anywhere near the same rate
- Though the majority of the investments are important to customers, the cost feels very high and customers feel dejected as they are doing what they can

*"It's hard to know... how much pay is going to increase in time and everything like that. Hard to know. It does feel like bills going up."*  
HH Bournemouth

## Accepting response

- There is acceptance that the investment proposed are achieving the right thing
- There is hope that the economy will stabilise and wages will increase to help battle the steep increases caused by inflation

*"Seems a lot because I mean my bill for last year was hundred and 80 pounds. Just add ons are going to be more than that. That doesn't seem right to me."*  
HH Bournemouth



	2050 goals		Reduction in £				
Wessex Water's proposal	Effective sewerage system	Halve the impact of sewer flooding on our customers	FOR YOU. FOR LIFE. Wessex Water VIA GROUP LIFE	Reducing sewage spills in further 45 locations	£11	<p><b>There are 8 areas where Bournemouth Water &amp; Wessex Water can reduce the cost of the plan</b></p> <p>Reducing sewage spills in a 150 locations but <b>not in a further 45 locations.</b></p> <p>Removing everyone from water poverty by 2040 rather than 2030 (adds £6 to bills instead of £24)</p> <p>Aim for 50% operational net zero and stay at that level (adds £1 to bills instead of £6) &amp; build more storage barns to cope with increasing volumes of sludge, test new sludge treatment tech but not roll these out (adds £6 to bills instead of £8).</p>	
	Great river & coastal water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To restore the quality of rivers and coastal waters</li> <li>Zero pollution incidents</li> </ul>		Removing everyone from water poverty	£18		
	Great customer experience	Be a top 10 customer service provider in the UK		Operationally net zero	£5		
	Net zero carbon & biodiversity	Be a net zero carbon business by 2040		Remove carbon & pollutants from sewer sludge	£2		
Bournemouth Water's proposal	Boosting water resources & supply resilience	Resilience to climate change & higher population	Bournemouth Water	350,000 smart meters and water efficiency support	£2		Slower roll-out of smart meter, everyone has a smart meter by 2045 instead of 2035 (adds £2 to bills instead of £4)
	Maintain top quality drinking water supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water that looks, tastes &amp; smells great</li> <li>Replace all lead pipes</li> </ul>		Replace 20,000 lead pipes	£0.70		Delay investment to 2040 and accelerate after that, replacing 10,000 pipes by 2030 (adds £0.70 to bills instead of £1.40)
	Biodiversity & nature recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Doubling nature on sites</li> <li>Net zero operational emissions by 2030</li> </ul>		Operationally net zero	£2.70		Slowest option, achieve operational net zero status in 2040 instead of 2030 (adds £1.30 to bills instead of £4)
	Trusted customer and community experiences	Fair and affordable bills Excellent and innovative customer service		Removing everyone from water poverty	£5		No additional customers supported, leaving around 100,000 in water poverty. Adds £0 to bills instead of £5.

# Must do plan



# Must do plan – bill impact (average bill)

Whilst customers are willing to see reduced investment in smart meters and net zero, the other investments seem too important to compromise on (and for a relatively small impact on bills).

## There are 8 areas where Bournemouth Water & Wessex Water can reduce the cost of the plan

Reducing sewage spills in a 150 locations but **not in a further 45 locations.**

Removing everyone from water poverty by 2040 rather than 2030 (adds £6 to bills instead of £24)

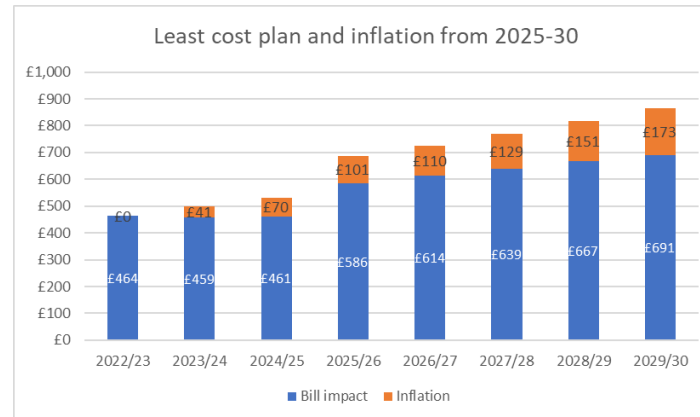
Aim for 50% operational net zero and stay at that level (adds £1 to bills instead of £6) & build more storage barns to cope with increasing volumes of sludge, test new sludge treatment tech but not roll these out (adds £6 to bills instead of £8).

Slower roll-out of smart meter, everyone has a smart meter by 2045 instead of 2035 (adds £2 to bills instead of £4)

Delay investment to 2040 and accelerate after that, replacing 10,000 pipes by 2030 (adds £0.70 to bills instead of £1.40)

Slowest option, achieve operational net zero status in 2040 instead of 2030 (adds £1.30 to bills instead of £4)

No additional customers supported, leaving around 100,000 in water poverty. Adds £0 to bills instead of £5.



*“Even if it's expensive, these are where the priorities are. This is more important.”*  
HH Bournemouth

*“The reductions are very little from what you wanted to charge.”*  
HH Bournemouth

- Per month, the Must do plan doesn't offer much of a reduction to customer bills
- It feels like the bill reduction doesn't match up with the reduced investments – much less is being done for not a lot less money
- Of all the investments to cut back on, smart meters is one where customers are most happy to reduce investment and bill impact
- Net zero is also an area that, though important, could be an area to save money – although the reduction is minimal so may as well continue
- Lead pipes, sewage sludge and sewage spills feel too important to compromise on

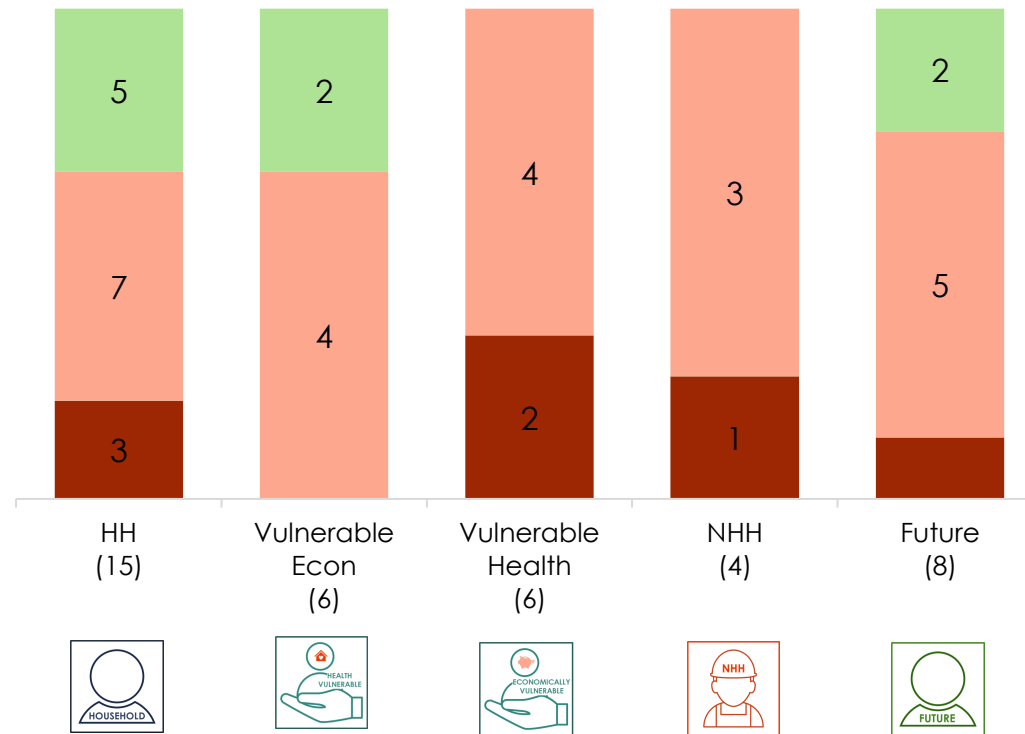


# Summary: Preferred Phasing

Most customers interviewed would prefer seeing an increase in bills starting sooner than later, though 5/15 HH customers are unsure.



- I don't know enough at the moment to give an answer
- An increase in bills starting sooner, spreading increases across different generations of bill-payers
- An increase in bills starting later, putting more of the increases onto younger and future bill-payers

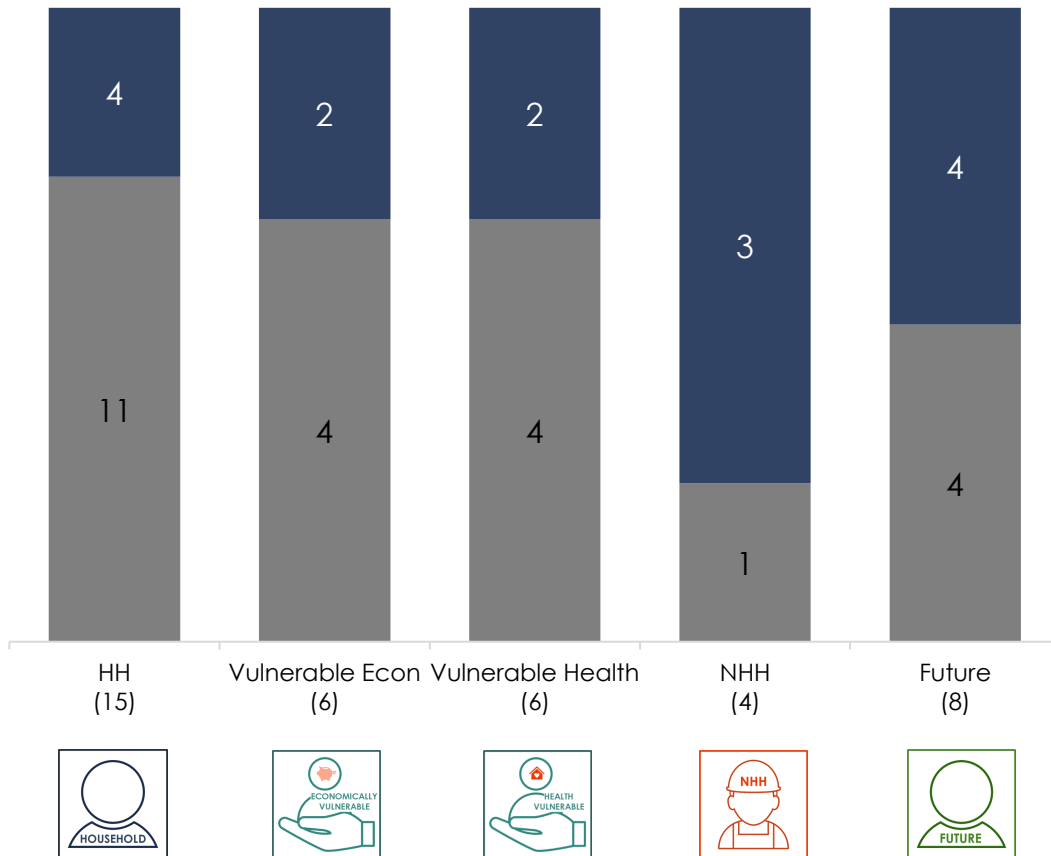


Source: Appendix A, B/C, D, E: Long term investment by the water company will require an increase in customer bills. Bills could increase in different ways over time. For example, there could be increases now for current bill payers, or bigger increases in the long term for future generations. Which one of the following options would you prefer?

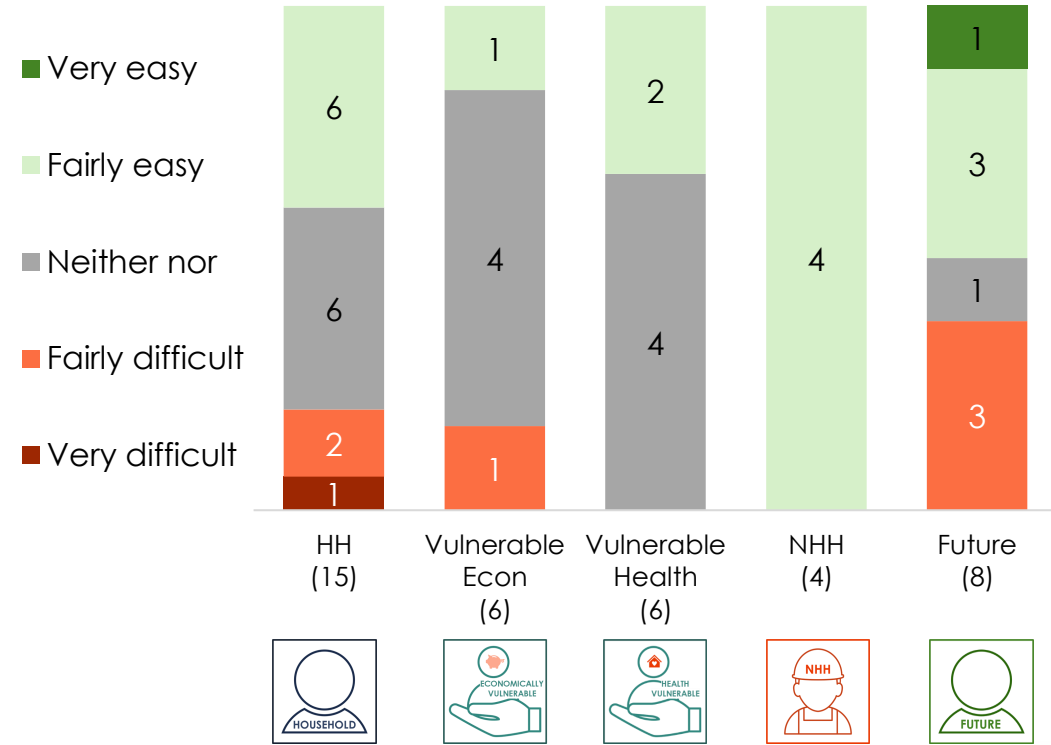
# Proposed vs. Must do (based on personalised bill)

Many HH customers felt it was an easy decision to choose their preferred plan – a little more uncertainty amongst the vulnerable customers interviewed.

**Proposed** = 15/39  
**Must do** = 24/39



## Ease of choosing preferred plan





# Summary: Proposed and 'must do' plan (personalised bill)

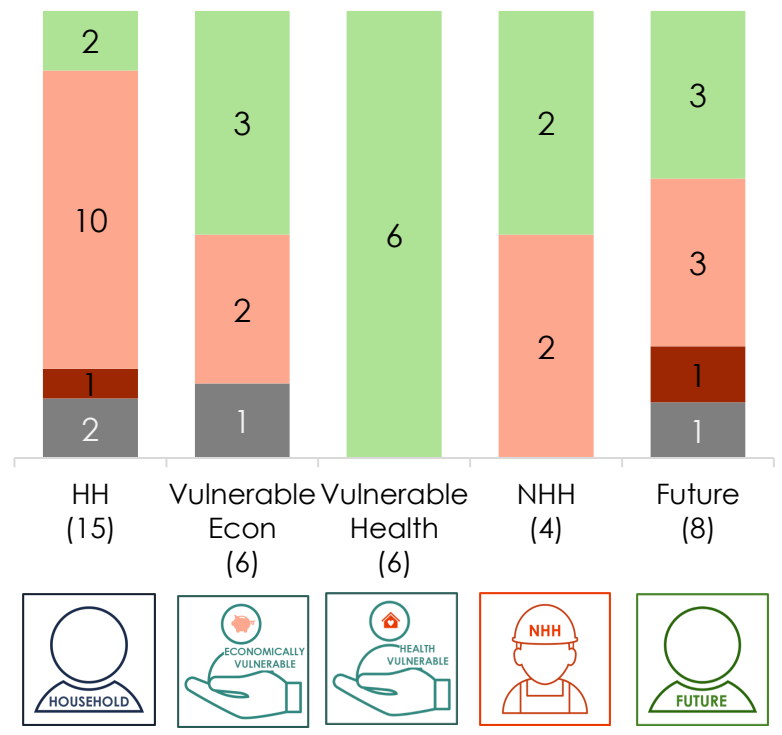


## ACCEPTABILITY

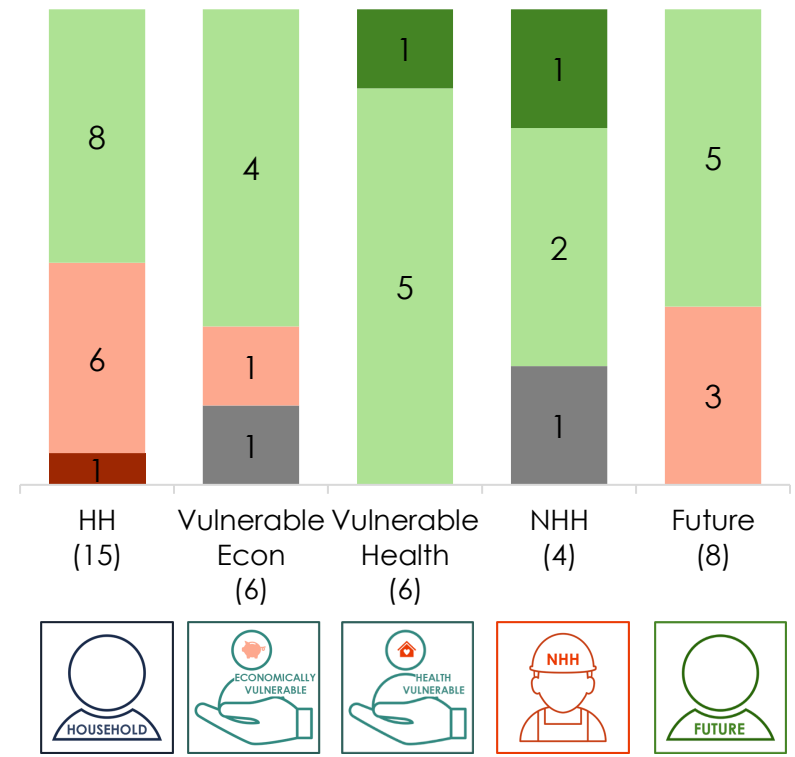
More customers find the must do plan acceptable than the proposed plan. Rejection of the proposed plan is mainly driven by HH customers.

### PROPOSED

- Completely acceptable
- Acceptable
- Unacceptable
- Completely unacceptable
- Don't know



### MUST DO

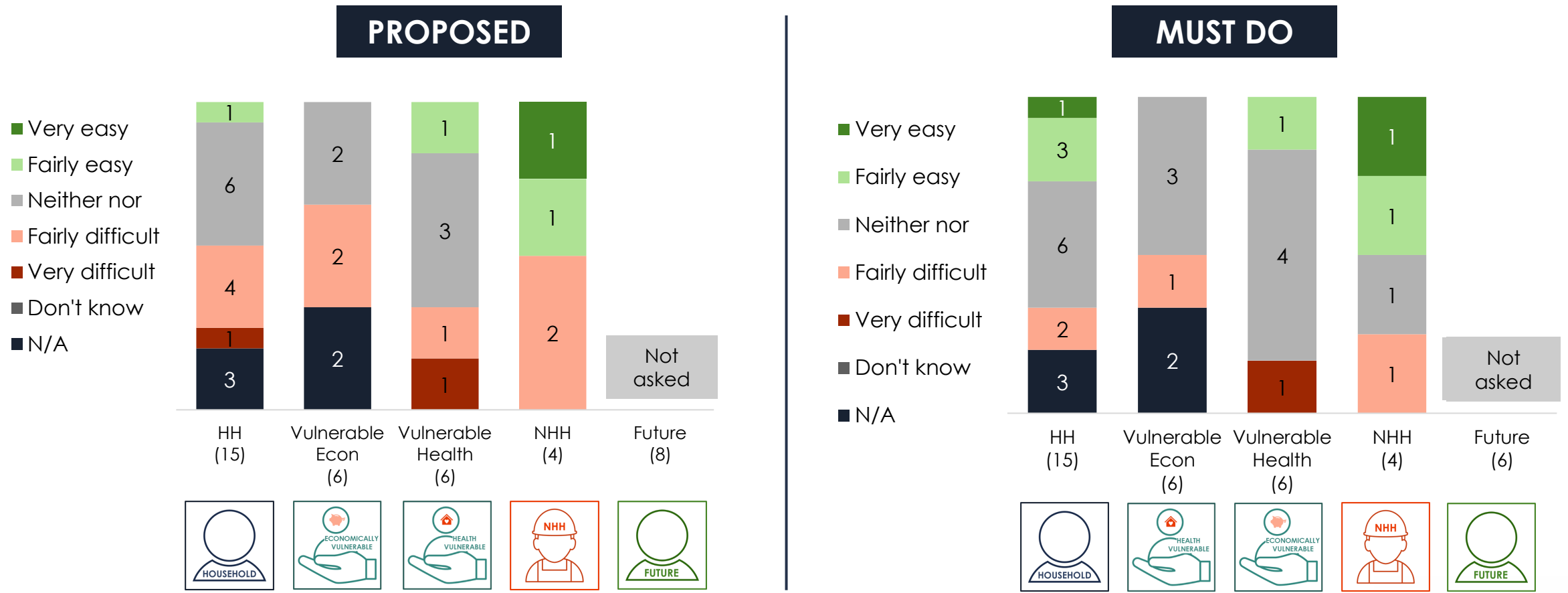


Source: Appendix A, B/C, D, E: Thinking about how your income may change in the future, how easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to afford the water and sewerage bills **for the proposed plan**? Based on everything you have heard and read about the company's proposed business plan, how acceptable or unacceptable is it to you?

# Summary: Proposed and 'must do' plan (personalised bill) AFFORDABILITY



Most customers are uncertain or pessimistic that they would be able to afford the bill.



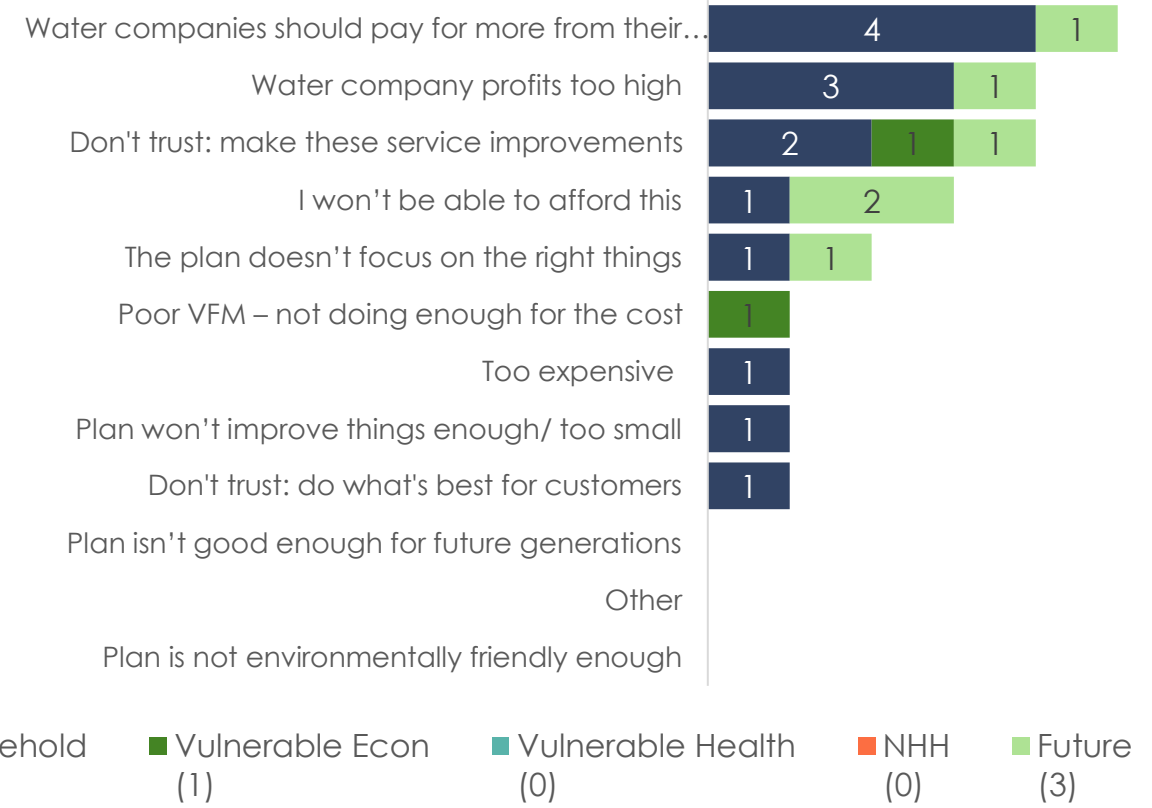
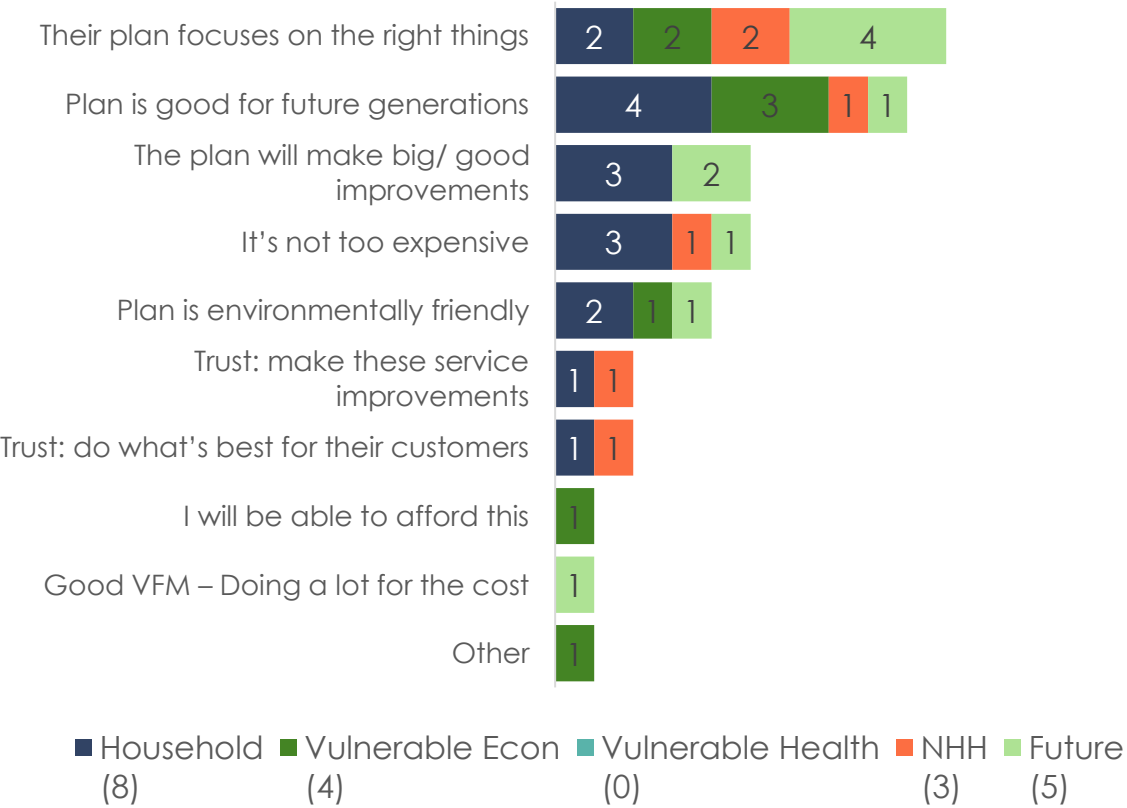
Source: Appendix A, B/C, D, E: Thinking about how your income may change in the future, how easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to afford the water and sewerage bills for the proposed plan? Based on everything you have heard and read about the company's proposed business plan, how acceptable or unacceptable is it to you?

# Summary: Reasons for accepting/rejecting the Must Do plan

Like the proposed plan, those who accept it see that it focusses on the right things and would be beneficial for future generations. This plan is largely rejected by customers believing water companies profits are too high, that companies should pay more, and that it doesn't focus on the right things.

## Reasons for accepting

## Reasons for rejecting



Source: Appendix A, B/C, D, E: Thinking about how your income may change in the future, how easy or difficult do you think it would be for you to afford the water and sewerage bills for the proposed plan? Based on everything you have heard and read about the company's proposed business plan, how acceptable or unacceptable is it to you?

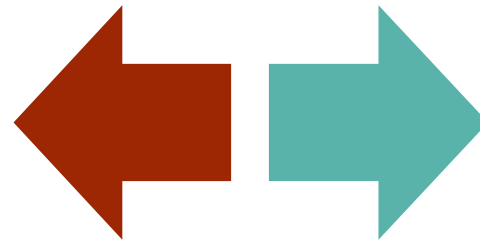


# Conclusions and recommendations

For Bournemouth Water and Wessex Water customers, investments that are considered high priority are those that allow water supply and sewerage management to run smoothly and effectively. Any investments that go above and beyond this are questioned; customers want to see these funded outside of customer bills or deprioritised

## Customers least supportive where the investments:

- Feel strongly under the responsibility of water companies to pay out of their profits e.g. net zero and micropollutants
- Feel the benefit is counterintuitive e.g. affordability – increasing bills may push more people into poverty
- Where the issue feels a little less urgent than the others e.g. protecting natural resources, sewer flooding, smart meters, lead pipes



## Customers support the plans where the investments:

- Have a clear, tangible benefit to the customer e.g. Reliable water supply, clean and safe tap water, water quality
- Are particularly urgent and need to be addressed immediately e.g. storm overflows, leakage, pollution

## What will improve plan acceptability & affordability?

- Customers want to see more ambitious targets for leakage, and less priority on protecting natural resources
- Make clear the role of housing developers for the nutrient removal investment (customers do not want this to be a profiteering exercise)
- Customers happy with a slower rollout of smart meters as this doesn't feel like an urgent investment. Also, more communication required about how they work, how much can be saved (both financially and in terms of water) and whether they will work better than it is perceived they do in the energy sector)
- More information/communication about how investments are put together, and what the relationship is with company profits and shareholder dividend
- Cost is the key driver influencing customers when assessing the plans – anything that can be done to reduce cost will help

Acceptance, or lack of, not clearly and overtly driven by the Bristol Water or Wessex Water plans. Scepticism around bill increases was generic. In terms of acceptability, customers assessed each commitment on its own merits with little reference to who offered it.



# BLUE MARBLE

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# Additional segment analysis for Health Vulnerable and NHH customers





## Health vulnerable sample achieved = 6/8

- **Age:** 2 x under 45, 4 x over 45
- **Gender:** 3 x F, 3 x M
- **Metering:** 4 x metered, 2 x unmetered
- **PSR status:** 5 x on or eligible for PSR
- **Examples of vulnerability include:** physical health conditions, disability
- **Recruitment:** 5 x list opt ins, 1 x free find

### Consumer context

- The cost of living crisis is a notable life challenge for the majority.
- Many are trying to cut down on energy and water in order to save money on bills.
- Some with and some without jobs, but none able to make savings as income goes straight out on costs.

### Pre-read: Spontaneous views on additional support via PSR / social tariff

- Pensioner's Credit a much more widely known scheme and deemed to be helpful to health vulnerable customers.
- Lots don't know about the type of help available for those with health conditions.

### What needs do this segment have?

- Guidance on how to reduce water bill.
- Home or face to face visit to look at smart meters for vulnerable customers.
- Future planning for finances – customers are 'take each day as it comes' with their financial situation and need to have clarity over future outgoings and income.





## The business plan proposal for vulnerable customers – vulnerability strategy 18

Wessex Water will continue to follow their ethos: every customer matters



In future, Wessex Water and Bristol Water will continue to develop their goals across these 4 key themes:

<p><b>Using data wisely</b></p> <p>This helps Wessex Water to assess the effectiveness and uptake of their support and identify and target activity proactively and effectively</p>	<p><b>Growing partnerships</b></p> <p>This area is designed to increase the number and variety of Wessex Water's partners and to work with them in a way that suits them to best engage with their clients, i.e. you – the customer</p>	<p><b>Community engagement</b></p> <p>To extend their reach and engagement across communities, break down barriers to engagement and reach those who might otherwise not have been heard</p>	<p><b>Improving the customer journey</b></p> <p>To make it as easy as possible for customers to know about and access support through the channel of their choice and to have an excellent customer experience</p>
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## Vulnerability strategy viewed positively

- All health vulnerable customers felt the strategy has acceptable plans – they particularly felt it is commendable that Bournemouth is showing they understand the realities of difficult life conditions.
- Customers supported the company providing more options to contact its customers, but they also think that communication around the strategy could be improved further.
- One customer was not in full support of 'using data wisely' - they need to know if this means more data is collected and shared with company and impact on data privacy.

## The business plan proposal for vulnerable customers – customer services

Bournemouth Water propose to invest in the following areas in 2025-2030 to improve customer services

**Bournemouth Water**

- Build trust with customers and communities through transparency*
- Protect the environment and help customers do their part*
- Meet customer needs efficiently through agile operations*

- Making customer journeys **effortless, automated and seamless** across channels.
- Making it **easier to pay clear and fair bills**.
- Proactively **supporting any customer who needs help to pay** and avoid or escape debt.
- Setting up new **easy to use payment routes** such as an improved self-service portal.
- Extending their **priority services register**.
- **Supporting the local community**; and building trust by showing who they are and what they do.
- **Stop the Drop**. Caring for the environment by reducing water usage and leakage both now & in the future.

*"It's commendable – but they should make it more public than it has been, people don't know what they can access."*  
HEALTH VULNERABLE

*"The main points are acceptable. I think it's mainly about being able to communicate with customers and make it easy for customers to find support."*  
HEALTH VULNERABLE





## The business plan proposal for vulnerable customers – affordability

Bournemouth Water propose to invest in the following areas in 2025-2030 to ensure bills are affordable



- Continue to eliminate water poverty by increasing the number of households on their range of affordability schemes by 2030
- Increasing the use of metering to reduce bills for household customers by saving water, and energy
- Continue to work with a wide range of stakeholders across the region, such as Citizens Advice and local charities, to raise awareness of the support they can offer and reach customers who need them most.
- Increase use of data share to automatically provide help with bills for those who need it.
- Continue with the Neighbour Fund, helping develop our local communities.
- As part of the same group Bournemouth Water and South West Water has given customers £40million back through our [Watershare+](#) schemes, giving customers the chance to either receive shares in Pennon Group, or a credit against their bills; customers struggling to pay their bills will have therefore benefitted from £13 off their bills in 2023.

## Affordability plans

- Customers think the investment in affordability is important but remained sceptical about the implementation of the plans.
  - Some thought that Bournemouth will not achieve all the plans.
- A few customers thought that there should be less investment in use of debt services and more focus on targets such as leaks and sewage
  - Customers perceive other targets to be more important.
- Affordability should be a governmental target.

*"It will be interesting to see how much of this will be achieved. I don't think they will achieve everything, so I would say the success of this plan working is not great."*  
HEALTH VULNERABLE





## Priority services register – performance commitment

As we saw earlier, water companies service level targets, called 'performance commitments' for which they can receive penalties (when they do not achieve the target) or rewards (when they do).

The **Priority Services Performance Commitment** is one that has no financial penalties or rewards for companies, but companies are scored on how well they do just like they are on other performance commitments.

For Priority Services, the regulator tells water companies to:

- Keep accurate and up-to-date information on consumers who need specific help or service
- Make sure all consumers are told about the specialised priority services that are available
- Make sure the application process is easy to access, to understand, and to complete
- Make sure consumers can find all the information they need in a form they can use and understand
- Make sure that bill payers who need special assistance know how much they need to pay and when they need to pay by
- Operate a password scheme to make sure that consumers can identify company staff from potential bogus callers
- Make sure all metered bill payers can check their water usage regularly
- Make sure that disabled consumers know which of the company's public buildings and recreational facilities are equipped to cope with their needs
- Make sure that all staff are fully aware of the needs of, and services available for, disabled, chronically ill or elderly consumers

## Priority Services PC

- Health vulnerable customers think the commitment to improving performance is essential.
- Bournemouth water (performance result 93%) is doing a lot in contrast to Wessex water which was perceived as not doing as much as other companies.
- Customers felt the majority of support or information available is mostly available online, and Bournemouth should make it easier to access information about priority services.

*"How are they going to make sure consumers know about this? They should put it on the bill, either on the bill or on a separate piece of paper in with the bill, if they're going to do it, why not already? If no one takes it up then doesn't cost them anything."*

HEALTH VULNERABLE

*"I think this (PC) is excellent - every needs help if they have a disability."*

HEALTH VULNERABLE



# Health vulnerable: Response to plan on a page – affordability and acceptability

Customers find the proposals acceptable and generally would opt for goals to be achieved as soon as possible, however, paying the increased bill amount between 2025-2050 is unaffordable to the majority.

	2050 goals	Legally required No say	5 year targets: customer feedback	Longer term investments: your input on how & when	
Wessex Water's proposal	<b>Effective sewerage system</b> Halve the impact of sewer flooding on our customers	FOR YOU. FOR LIFE. Wessex Water WTL GROUP LIFE	<b>Reducing the number of sewage spills in 150 locations</b> £23	Reducing internal and external sewer flooding £11	
	<b>Great river &amp; coastal water</b> • To restore the quality of rivers and coastal waters • Zero pollution incidents		<b>Nutrient removal and river water quality monitoring</b> £47	Reduce pollution incidents to 14 per 10k of sewer pipe £4	
	<b>Great customer experience</b> Be a top 10 customer service provider in the UK			Removing everyone from water poverty £24	
	<b>Net zero carbon &amp; biodiversity</b> Be a net zero carbon business by 2040			Operationally net zero Remove carbon & pollutants from sewer sludge £8	
Bournemouth Water's proposal	<b>Boosting water resources &amp; supply resilience</b> Resilience to climate change & higher population	Bournemouth Water	<b>Reliable supply of water to customers, even during a drought</b> £14	Reduce leakage by 15% £6	
	<b>Maintain top quality drinking water supplies</b> • Water that looks, tastes & smells great • Replace all lead pipes		Maintain current level of supply interruptions £0	350,000 smart meters and water efficiency support £6	
	<b>Biodiversity &amp; nature recovery</b> • Doubling nature on sites • Net zero operational emissions by 2030		<b>Continue to deliver clean and safe tap water</b> £8	Reduce contacts on taste, smell and appearance £6	Replace 20,000 lead pipes £1
	<b>Trusted customer and community experiences</b> Fair and affordable bills Excellent and innovative customer service		<b>Protect natural resources</b> £5		Operationally net zero £4
					Removing everyone from water poverty £5

**What will it mean for bills?**

This proposed plan will have an impact on customers' bills.

**The average bill will increase by £24/month by 2030.**

This breaks down as:

- £10 to meet the investment required by the regulators (the blue and grey investments)
- £5 to meet the investments we propose over and above this (the white investments)
- £8 to meet inflation

**Deliberation centres around:**

- Timeline of proposed long-term investment being too long – thereby increasing bills over a longer timeframe.
- Customers would rather pay more over a shorter period (5 years) and then receive no bill increases.

**Response to proposed plan:**

- Investment goals are acceptable and customers do not think £24 a month is unaffordable, provided all of the targets are met.
- If customers are to continue to pay increased bills they need to see evidence that investment is making a difference over the short term (5 years).

*"If it's going to the right cause, and all the targets are being hit, then I don't mind the bill increase, but as some of the goal timelines get pushed back and pushed back, I would be less happy if that were the case and they were still raising costs."*  
HEALTH VULNERABLE

Summary	
Important	✓
Urgent	✓
Willing to pay	?
Able to pay	✓



## Jenny:

- **Age:** 76
- **Gender:** Female
- **Metering:** Metered
- **PSR status:** Unsure
- **Vulnerability:** arthritis affecting hands and feet
- **Summary:** finds plans acceptable and affordable.

Jenny suffers from rheumatoid arthritis and is registered as disabled. Jenny is retired but she lives with her husband who has worked from home since the pandemic. Jenny is still mobile and makes regular trips to the hospital for treatment, as well as doing as much as she can to help with shopping and looking after the house.

Jenny feels reasonably comfortable with her household income as she receives a good pension, but she worries it will be much more difficult when her husband retires. They spent little as a couple, preferring to save up for holidays. Jenny does not particularly struggle with paying the water bill: *"I don't have much contact with water companies - only when the bill comes through and I make a note of how much we'll pay each month then I forget about it"*.

Jenny is not aware of being on a PSR service, however, she thinks she did fill in a form a long time ago and believes she should be a priority customer. In case of an interruption, she would not be able to physically go and carry water from another pipe, or even carry bottled water, due to her disability.

Response to the plan for vulnerable customers:

- Jenny supported the plan for vulnerable customers. She found the support for those struggling financially to be of particularly high importance. She wants to see Bournemouth Water be as ambitious as possible with the vulnerability strategy.
- She found the plan acceptable but also wanted further information on how to apply for priority services. She did not think that the plan is as public as it should be.

Response to plan on page:

- Jenny found the plan on the page very detailed and as a result felt she was able to accept all the proposed investments.
- She felt that paying £24 extra per month was affordable, and believes that customers have to pay this amount in order to see the targets met.





## Callum:

- **Age:** 92
- **Gender:** Male
- **Metering:** Not metered
- **PSR status:** On PSR
- **Vulnerability:** old age and dizzy spells; tires easily
- **Summary:** finds plans acceptable and affordable.

Callum finds day to day activities tiring and difficult. He has to rest often and frequently suffers from dizzy spells. He doesn't like going to the hospital as he worries that they will not release him home which is where he prefers to be even if it can be a struggle.

Callum survives on his pension but has no other savings as he went through bankruptcy at the end of his working life. This, however, makes him very conscious of not using too much water and electricity and he believes that living frugally does need to mean living unhappily.

Callum is on the PSR and receives pension credits and war pension credits from the water company. He is currently happy with his bill amount and thinks it is fair to be means-tested and paying a lower amount as a result of his background.

Response to the plan for vulnerable customers:

- Callum supported the plan for vulnerable customers. He thinks the decreased bills for those who are vulnerable is helpful and supports all of the plans in the vulnerability strategy.
- He worries, however, that most of the information available is online and that he will find it more and more difficult to access online information as technology evolves. He feels like he understands his water services very well at the moment, but feels like he might be left out if things change and he is not kept informed.

Response to plan on page:

- Callum found the plan affordable and acceptable. *"I would be willing to spend more or get less discount if it'll help reach some of these goals."*
- Callum's support for the plan is based on his experience of not seeing a huge amount of investment over a long time period. He believes that throughout his entire life as a customer he has not seen any major investment and therefore thinks this is the right time to invest to improve services.





## Gillian:

- **Age:** 32
- **Gender:** Female
- **Metering:** Metered
- **PSR status:** Not on PSR
- **Vulnerability:** mental health condition
- **Summary:** finds plans acceptable and affordable.

Gillian lives as a single parent with two small children. She has been suffering with mental health issues linked to depression for a number of years. Gillian works part time and finds that her wages are insufficient for her household and as a result she is concerned that this is having a negative impact on the lives of her children.

Due to her low household income, Gillian is really noticing the cost of living crisis and she feels particularly vulnerable to any increases in prices for food or utilities or water.

Gillian is not on the PSR and was unaware of this service prior to her interview. She feels that she would be eligible for financial support to help her with her water bill as she currently receives support with her council tax due to her mental health problems.

Response to the plan for vulnerable customers:

- Gillian supported the plan for vulnerable customers and particularly emphasised the need for investment to raise awareness of the schemes available to vulnerable people. She herself was unaware of the support she could receive as a result of her economic and health condition.
- She thought that for the water company to be thinking of vulnerable customers is excellent and it will encourage her to reach out to the company in the near future.

Response to plan on page:

- Gillian thought that the plans were very ambitious, but was doubtful that all the targets would be reached e.g. the plan to end up with 0 pollution incidents caused her to doubt whether this is ever achievable and worry that bills will continue to go up to achieve this.
- In the shorter term (over 5 years) Gillian found the plan affordable and acceptable but she would not be happy paying an ever- increasing bill up to 2050.





## Non-household sample achieved = 4

- **Size:** 3 x micro NHH, 1 x larger NHH
- **Examples of business type include:** restaurant, recruitment, transport
- **Usage type:** 2 x domestic, 2 x domestic and non-domestic
- **Usage volume:** 3 x low spend
- **Recruitment:** 4 x free find

## NHH customers are really feeling the impact of the current economic climate

- Not only are household expenses going up but the rise in electricity and fuel prices are having a big impact
- Some who feel more 'protected' from these rising costs (e.g. working in recruitment) still feel scared and apprehensive about the future

"If things carry on the way they are I don't think I'll have a business by the end of the year."  
NHH

## NHH customers are willing to pay more for the investments they feel are the most worthwhile

- Business customers are more likely to assess the value of investments
- Though the bill impact is high and for some too expensive, they are willing to pay more for investments they deem worthwhile (such as leakage or storm overflows)
- However, they would like to see less spent on investments that feel like less of a priority such as smart meters

"Certain areas I'd be happy to pay more and get it done quicker."  
NHH



# NHH: Response to plan on a page – affordability and acceptability

NHH customers were surprised at how much bills would increase to fund these investments. Investments seem worthwhile but would want to see water companies paying for longer term investments. For some of the more important investments, it's worth paying more to just get it done.

	2050 goals	Legally required No say	5 year targets: customer feedback	Longer term investments: your input on how & when	
Wessex Water's proposal	<b>Effective sewerage system</b> Halve the impact of sewer flooding on our customers	FOR YOU FOR LIFE Wessex Water NHH	Reducing the number of sewage spills in 150 locations £28	Reducing internal and external sewer flooding £13	
	<b>Great river &amp; coastal water</b> • To restore the quality of rivers and coastal waters • Zero pollution incidents		Nutrient removal and river water quality monitoring £56	Reduce pollution incidents to 14 per 10k of sewer pipe £4	
	<b>Net zero carbon &amp; biodiversity</b> Be a net zero carbon business by 2040				Reducing sewage spills in further 45 locations £14
				Operationally net zero Remove carbon & pollutants from sewer sludge £5 £9	
Bournemouth Water's proposal	<b>Boosting water resources &amp; supply resilience</b> Resilience to climate change & higher population	Bournemouth Water	Reliable supply of water to customers, even during a drought £39	Reduce leakage by 15% £16	
	<b>Maintain top quality drinking water supplies</b> • Water that looks, tastes & smells great • Replace all lead pipes		Continue to deliver clean and safe tap water £22	Maintain current level of supply interruptions £0	
	<b>Biodiversity &amp; nature recovery</b> • Doubling nature on sites • Net zero operational emissions by 2030		Protect natural resources £14	Reduce contacts on taste, smell and appearance £16	350,000 smart meters and water efficiency support £11
	<b>Trusted customer and community experiences</b> Fair and affordable bills Excellent and innovative customer service				Replace 20,000 lead pipes £4
				Operationally net zero £11	
				Removing everyone from water poverty £14	

“At an awkward time where we're faced with such high costs in so many areas that generally most business confronted... invest in keeping the bills low for the here and now.”  
NHH

### Deliberation centres around:

- Leakage and pollution feel like the most important and pressing of the 6 performance commitments
- The results/impact of the investments feel small given the size of the bill increase e.g. won't notice having supply interruptions reduced by a few minutes
- On board with the legally required investments as they all feel necessary; though protecting natural resources doesn't feel quite as high up on the priority list in the context of other investment areas
- Unsure about nutrient removal – a large bill impact for an unfamiliar issue
- Reluctance to pay towards research in micropollutant investment; this needs to be funded by the water companies or externally, not by customers.

### Response to proposed plan:

- Whilst there are limited strong objections to the investments themselves, the bill impact feels very high
- NHH customers would like to see water company profits being spent rather than money collected from customer bills
- Some areas would be happy to pay to get it done quicker e.g. leakage, pollution, storm overflows
- Other areas can wait e.g. smart meters

“Massive amount of money for something that hasn't been in the public eye. [REF: nutrient removal]”  
NHH



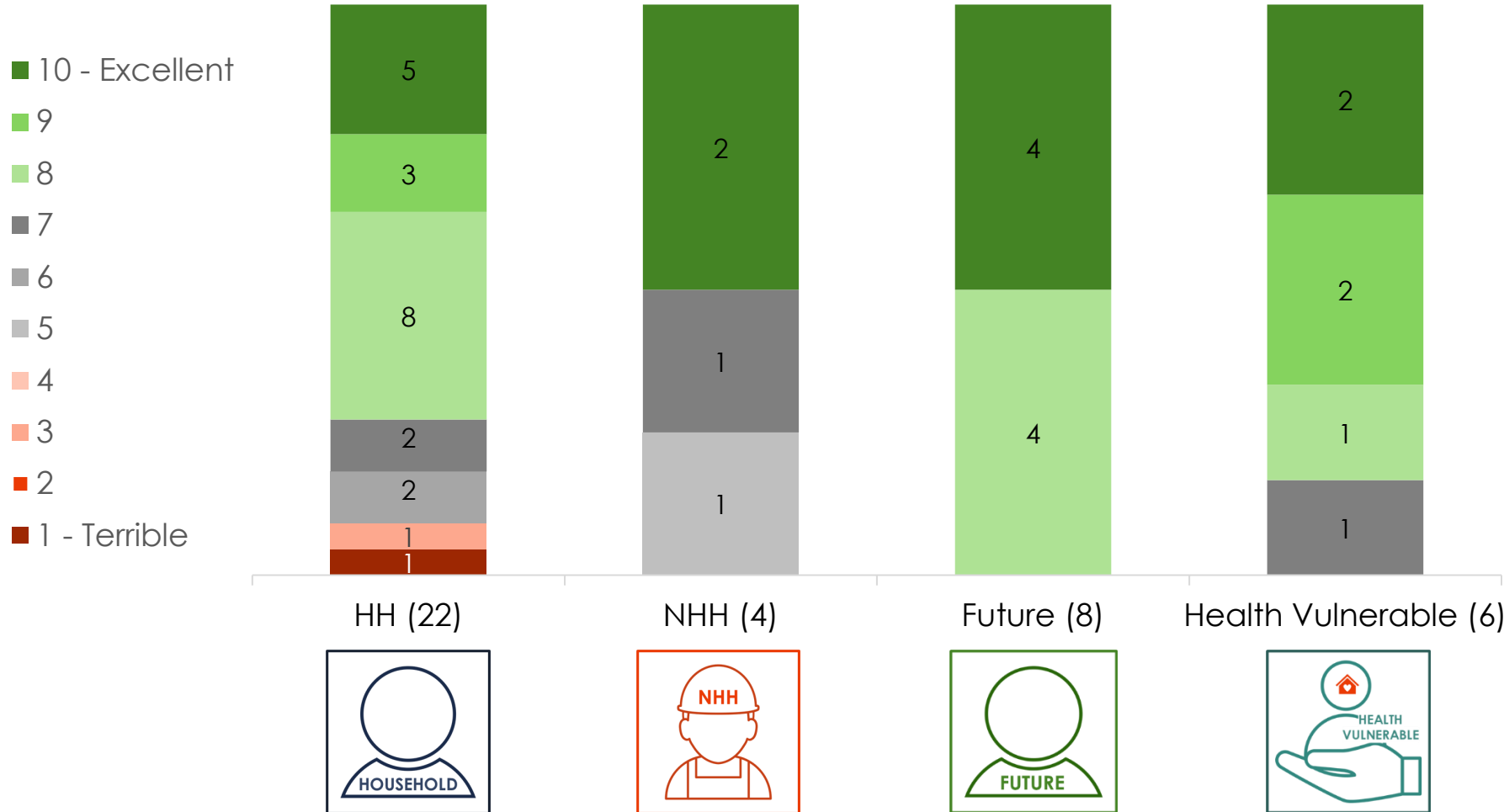
# Event feedback



BLUE MARBLE

# Event feedback: ratings of the deliberative events

Three quarters of the total sample gave the event a rating between 8 and 10. Future and health vulnerable customers were most likely to rate the events highly.



Out of our sample:  
**31/40**  
 would rate the events 8/10, 9/10 or 10/10

Source: Appendix A, B/C, D, E: Overall, how would you rate this event out of 10? (Where 1 is terrible and 10 is excellent)

# Event feedback: reasons for ratings

Participants who rated the events highly thought they were informative and well facilitated, while those with lower ratings appeared to lack trust in water companies.

	Reasons for ratings of 10-8	Reasons for ratings of 1-7
<b>HH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informative, interesting, easy to understand</li> <li>• Good to hear about improvements</li> <li>• Showed that customer views are valued</li> <li>• Enjoyed discussions in small groups</li> <li>• Friendly environment</li> <li>• Well managed and facilitated</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough opportunity for feedback; response options too narrow</li> <li>• Money spent on events could be spent on improvements</li> <li>• Doubt that companies will take feedback into account</li> <li>• Not enough time to read information before event</li> </ul>
<b>NHH</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informative</li> <li>• Seamless video call</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like to see proof that improvements are being made</li> <li>• Some questions and examples overlapped</li> </ul>
<b>Future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informative, easy to understand, well-explained</li> <li>• Enjoyable</li> <li>• All participants could voice their opinions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No ratings under 8</li> </ul>
<b>Health Vulnerable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitators were pleasant and explained information well</li> <li>• Information was provided before the event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No reason given</li> </ul>

*"The person I spoke with took the time to explain what we were there for and went through all the slides shown in a clear and concise manner. Also, she had a very pleasant manner.."*

*Health Vulnerable Answer: 9/10*

*"Very informative, interesting to learn lots of things about water and the pros and cons."*

*NHH Answer: 10/10*

*"Fairly straight forward however some questions/examples seemed to overlap and make some of the context contradictory."*

*NHH Answer: 7/10*

*"Very extremely informative as I was clueless before."*

*Future customer Answer: 10/10*

*"There was little opportunity for actual feedback. The response possibilities were narrow and only within boundaries that the company wanted to hear. I am disappointed by the apparent lack of transparency and the inability to discuss openly the profits made by shareholders and the impact that this has on water bills."*

*HH Answer: 3/10*

*"It was good to hear about the improvements needed, and that customers views are being valued."*

*HH Answer: 8/10*



# Event feedback: suggestions for improvements

Changing the timings of events was the most common suggestion participants made. Other suggestions included making the events more accessible and providing more information.

## HH

- Some participants suggested changing the timings of the event (e.g. make the event shorter, start earlier, have better organisation to get started)
- Some suggested having more refreshments on offer
- A few suggested making it easier to hear the speakers (through better acoustics or a microphone for the main speaker)
- Other suggestions included making the information provided more precise, and following up with participants after the event

## NHH

- One participant suggested providing more background information to make it easier to comment on the issues
- One suggested a group discussion to share ideas with other customers

## Future

- Many participants suggested changing the timings of the event to make it shorter or more convenient (e.g. avoiding rush hour, not hosting it on a weekday evening)
- One participant suggested better accommodations for Hard of Hearing participants

## Health Vulnerable

- One participant suggested giving participants more notice of the event
- One suggested providing more data on company targets
- One suggested presenting text on a coloured background to make it more accessible for participants with reading disabilities

*"Preparation of food/drink better. No milk. Had to ask the hired hall to supply extra milk which was not appropriate. Also keeping in touch with the customer after the event with results from our input. This will also allow us to learn if our input has made a difference."*

*HH Answer: 8/10*

*"Need to be at a better time, 6pm is right when most people finish work so doing a day's work and then going straight to the event for 3 hours was quite long."*

*Future customer Answer: 8/10*

*"Text available with option of coloured background for those with reading disabilities."*

*Future customer Answer: 10/10*

*"Bit more background information before and during as we were not aware of some of the points raised so was hard to comment on."*

*NHH Answer: 10/10*

*"Maybe start a little earlier."*

*HH Answer: 9/10*

